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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

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KEN AND RYU FACE OFF IN THEIR GREATEST FIGHTER YET



PAC-MAN

FROM CLASSIC EIGHTIES COIN-OP TO APPLE'S IPHONE… HOW **NAMCO BANDAI'S** YELLOW MASCOT JUST KEEPS EATING

READY!

IN THE CHAIR
JON HARE
MUSINGS FROM AN 8-BIT ICON

THE MAKING OF…
RESIDENT EVIL
HOW CAPCOM REDEFINED SURVIVAL HORROR

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TONY CROWTHER
WE SIT DOWN FOR A CHAT WITH ONE OF THE C64'S MOST PROLIFIC CODERS

ALIEN 8
ISOMETRIC SHENANIGANS WITH ULTIMATE'S CLASSY ADVENTURE

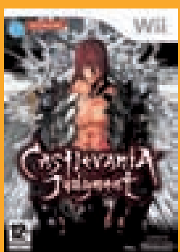
BLACK TIGER
THE TOUGHEST PLATFORMER THAT YOU'RE EVER LIKELY TO PLAY

ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING
Load → 61
LOAD 61

CLASSIC GAMING

A brief history of Castlevania





When Simon Belmont gingerly cracked his whip for the first time in 1986, little could he have known that he was at the beginning of a franchise that would span more than two decades, term a new sub-genre – the Metroidvania – and branch out into the expansive world of 3D. *Castlevania* did all this and more. Quickly setting a standard on the NES, thanks to its well-designed characters, challenging gameplay and constant battles with Count Dracula, Konami's franchise has now spawned over 20 different games and shows no sign of slowing down.

While it hit a slight stumbling block with its 3D adventures, its two-dimensional quests still remain the stuff of legend, with *Super Castlevania*, *Rondo Of Blood* and the almighty *Symphony Of The Night* remaining some of the greatest arcade adventures of all time. Now overseen by Koji Igarashi, the *Castlevania* series has since gone on to dominate Nintendo's handhelds, with the recently released *Order Of Ecclesia* returning to the classic level designs of old, but retaining the challenging gameplay, superb visuals and massive bosses that the franchise is known for. Add in *Castlevania Judgement* that pits classic *Castlevania* characters like Simon Belmont, Alucard and, of course, Count Dracula, and Konami's gothic series could well continue forever.



» *Order Of Ecclesia* retains *Castlevania*'s tradition for terrifying bosses. Careful now.

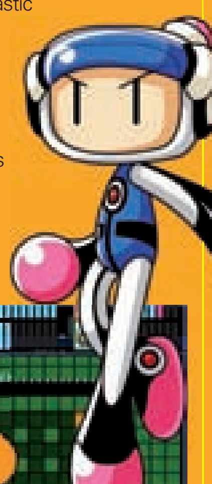
A brief history of Bomberman

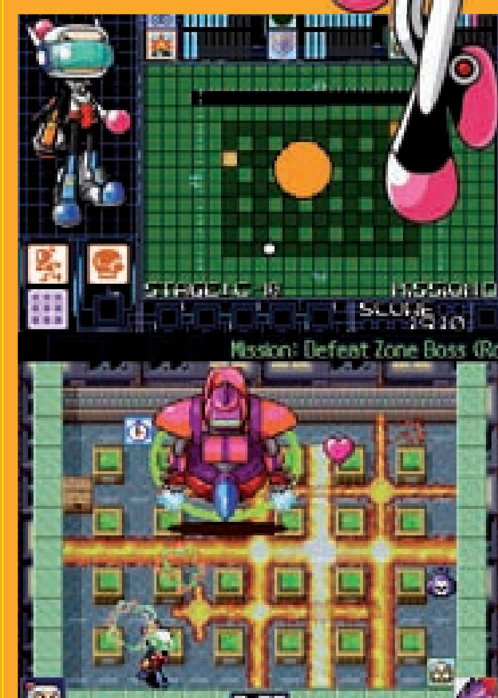


Once upon a time there was a young robot named Eric. He made his debut appearance on the MSX, ZX Spectrum and various Japanese computers in a gamer called *Eric And The Floaters*. Wanting to escape the factory he was built in, Eric would have to run around intricate mazes and drop bombs to destroy the titular floaters and earn his freedom.

Nowadays, Eric is known as Bomberman and the floaters themselves are nowhere to be seen. He retains his fascination with exploding devices, however, but has since gone on to star in a variety of different genres, from puzzle games to racing games.

Although he's not afraid of branching out into new genres – the recently released *Bomberman 2* on the DS, for example, features heavy RPG mechanics that enable you to continually evolve your main character with more powerful equipment – *Bomberman* will always be best known for the fantastic multiplayer battles he's constantly appeared in over the years, where a group of like-minded players will do everything they can to blow their opponents to kingdom come. This multiplayer mayhem continues with *Bomberman 2*, which makes the competitive battling a breeze thanks to a range of handy options and Wi-Fi support.





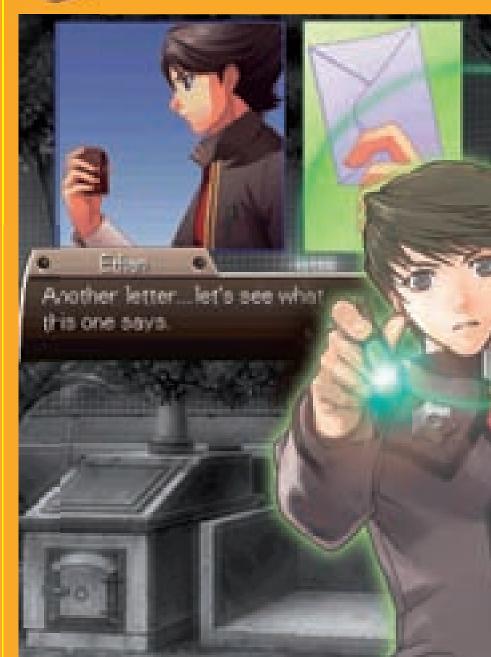
A brief history of Point-and-click adventures



Point-and-click adventures have had something of resurgence in recent years, with the PC, Wii and DS all proving to be excellent formats for the popular genre. Mainly used back in the day by publishers like LucasArts and Sierra, the point-and-click interface made it incredibly easy to string along complex commands, move your character around, pick up objects and attempt virtually any task you could think of.

As gaming changed, many studios felt that the genre was no longer worth any effort and anticipated sequels like *Full Throttle 2* and *Sam & Max 2* were eventually shelved – it appeared that this entertaining genre would be lost forever. Luckily, Nintendo released the Wii and DS and effectively saved the day. The new interfaces were perfect and easily replicated the controls of a mouse, so many studios began resurrecting classic franchises and releasing them for a whole new generation to enjoy.

Konami's *Time Hollow* is the latest adventure to hit the DS and like cult classics *Hotel Dusk* and *Phoenix Wright*, it's already starting to carve out its own little niche in the now-overcrowded genre. The gimmick here is time travel, which enables Konami to play around with mind-bending puzzles and a constantly twisting narrative – essentially everything you'd expect to see in a good point-and-click adventure.



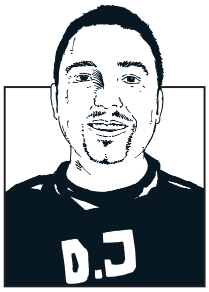
» Puzzles are plentiful in *Time Hollow*, so you're going to need your stylus… all right, Hollow Pen, to solve them.





THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE RESIDENT EVIL MOMENT



DARRAN JONES

For me it has to be *Resident Evil IV*. The way Capcom rebuilt the game from the ground up and in doing so, totally revitalised the genre, still manages to take my breath away. Simply an incredible game.
Expertise: Juggling a wife, two children and Retro Gamer
Currently playing: *R-Type Dimensions*
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



ASHLEY DAY

A personal one for me: it's when I defeated a boss in *Code Veronica* just by using the knife. I had no ammo and there was no way to acquire any more. It took me forever, obviously, but I'm quite proud.
Expertise: The games of Team 17, MSX, Sega's *Shining Force* series
Currently playing:
Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney
Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



STUART HUNT

My best moment is laughing at Barry Burton's heinously ridiculous dialogue. Barry: "Jill, here's a lockpick. It might come in handy if you, the master of unlocking, take it with you". Go stick it in your windpipe Barry!
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
Skate 2
Favourite game of all time:
Skate 2



CRAIG GRANNELL

Having never actually played *Resident Evil* nor watched the movie, my best moment would be avoiding the franchise and instead playing *House Of The Dead* until my brain exploded.
Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control
Currently playing:
Frenzy
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



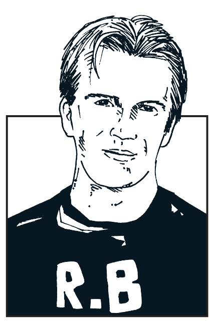
PAUL DRURY

That moment in the original when the first zombie slowly peers up at you, bloody-mouthed from noshing on neck, with this horrible look of 'you're next'. Man, this wasn't *Mario* or *Sonic*...
Expertise: Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing:
High School Musical 3: Dance!
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



DAVID CROOKES

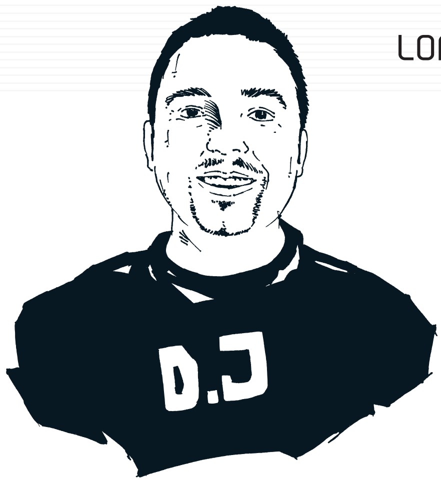
It's not the best moment but it's certainly the most memorable, for me anyway. Who could forget Jill Valentine uttering the immortal line, "I hope this is not Chris's blood." So classically bad.
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing:
Fable II
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



RICHARD BURTON

Resident Evil 2 in the police precinct's interrogation room when the Licker bursts through the two way mirror. I don't think my chocolate starfish has ever quivered so much during a video game...
Expertise: Stuff, nonsense, things and Pingu
Currently playing:
Astro Wars
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner

LOADING...



Cracking cover eh? Still, what I'm really pleased about is that Retro Gamer is once again able to deliver exciting exclusives that other magazines can only dream of. *Pac-Man's* creator, Toru Iwatani, graciously took time out of his hectic schedule as a lecturer at Tokyo Polytechnic University to speak to us about his original 1980 classic and its subsequent reboot in June 2007, while ex Sega of America head honcho Scot Bayliss gives a blow-by-blow account of Sega's poorly conceived Mega-CD. As juicy as those features are, it's The Making of *Resident Evil* that I'm most excited about this month. I've never seen Shinji Mikami as open and honest as he is here and he reveals some fascinating insight into the game that saved Capcom.

Of course, there are plenty more great articles to sink your teeth into this month, but I feel the above are typical of Retro Gamer's commitment to going that extra mile. And if you think this month's issue is impressive, just wait until you see what we have in store for you next issue...

Enjoy the magazine



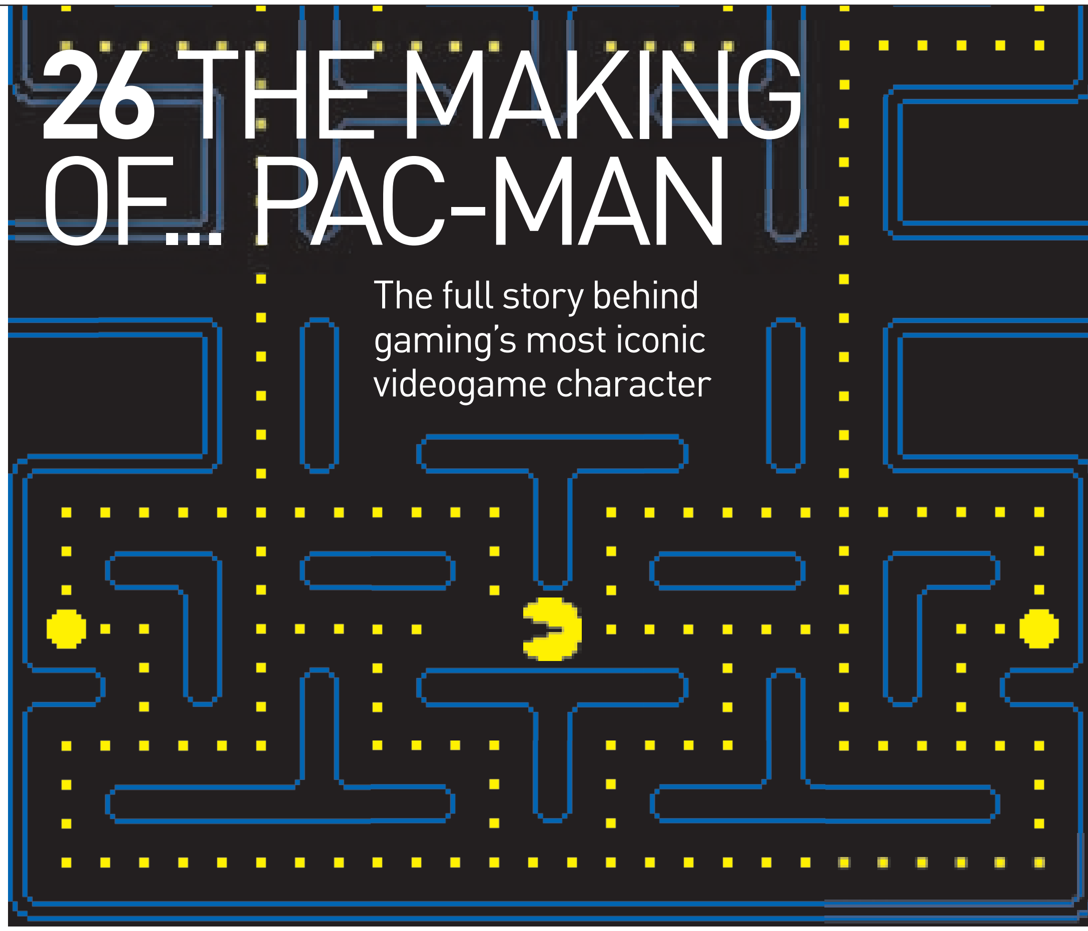


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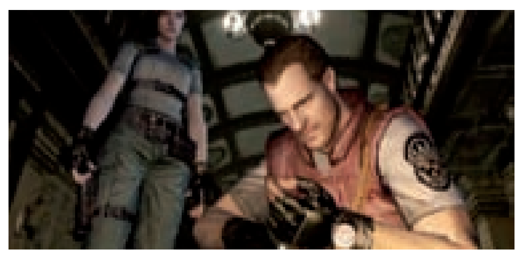
» Load 61 Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

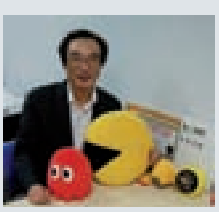
RETRO REVIVALS



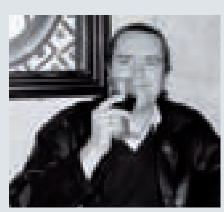




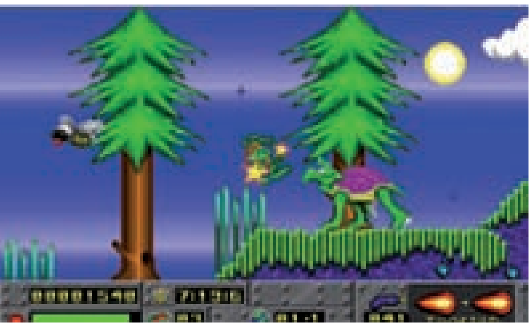
This month we've been chatting to…







> "How the PC evolved from office workhorse to gaming powerhouse" Craig Ritchie



80 THE CLASSIC GAME

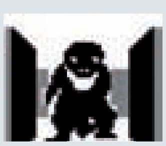
Why *Jazz Jackrabbit* helped prove that there was more to PC gaming than *Doom*

74 YOU'VE GOT THE TOUCH

Why Apple's iPhone is becoming a haven for retro games

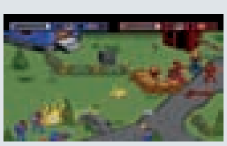


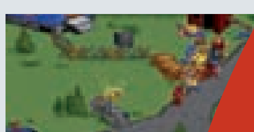
retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



24 GENERAL CHAOS

An Electronic Arts games as a reader's favourite game? Why the hell not. Douglas Kite states his case for this quirky RTS



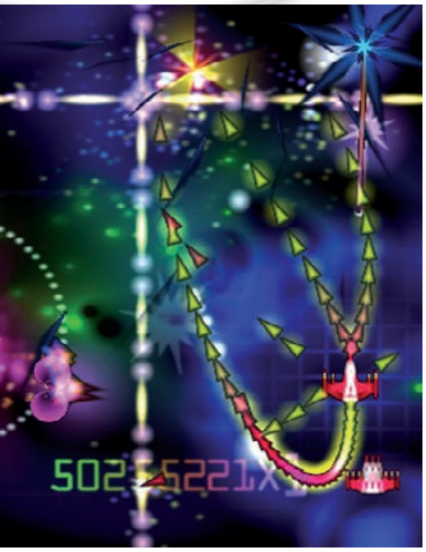


ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED

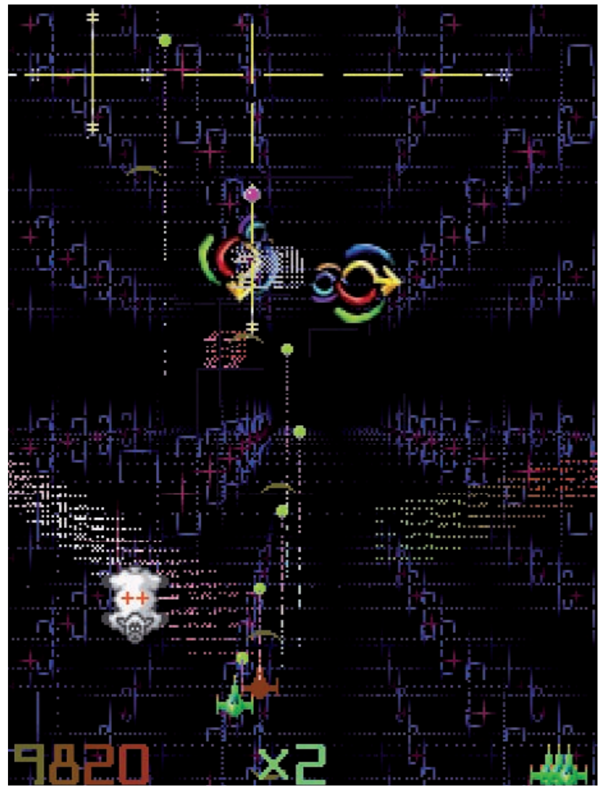
» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD

RETRORADAR





» Gridrunner +++ is released on Xbox Live Arcade this April, expect a review shortly after.



GRIDRUNNER IS GOING LIVE

JEFF MINTER'S GRIDRUNNER+++ MAKES ITS WAY TO XBOX LIVE

Jeff Minter's new title *Gridrunner+++* (a working title, we believe), an Xbox Live reworking of his 2002 PC, Mac and now mobile phone game *Gridrunner++* (there's one less plus in it), which in turn was a sequel to his original C64 and Vic-20 classic, is being released on Microsoft's online service this coming April, following an initial PC release. And from the early screenshots of the game that we've seen so far, the game is looking pretty superb.

Regular readers will be aware that we have a real fondness for anything from *Mr Minter* – we can often be found whiling away the odd lunchtime hour playing dual match-ups on *Tempest 2K*, and we are huge fans of Minter's blisteringly brilliant *Space Giraffe* (which we awarded a glowing 98% score to in this mag). So we're particularly excited about getting our hands – and heads – around his latest PC and Xbox Live Arcade project.

Speaking to PC website Paper Rock Shotgun, Jeff had this to say about the game's development, and why he felt the need to return to the game once again.

"*Gridrunner* was one of my first and most successful games back in the day, simple though it was. I figure some people might remember the old thing and that might help awareness of the release (we've included simulations of the original Vic-20 and C64 versions in the game for people to indulge their nostalgia)."

He also had this to say about what he feels is one of the biggest draws of the videogame. "I really like how as you power the ship up you get an insane amount of bullets firing from your ship – rather than dodging through bullet hell, you become bullet hell. It's a glorious inversion of the kind of constraint you had in early games (such as those around at the time of the original Vic-20 *Gridrunner*) where – often due to hardware limitations – the player often only had one shot on screen at a time."

The original *Gridrunner* (1983), which was released for the C64 and Vic-20, was a frenzied attack on the senses with gameplay, and looks that shared many parallels with the classic arcade blaster *Centipede*. The games sequel, *Gridrunner ++* (2002) kept up that tradition by being a wonderfully trippy take on *Galaga* but boasting some pretty nifty parallax scrolling to give the impression that you're ship was travelling up-screen – you need to see it running to really appreciate it. It was wonderfully addictive, ridiculously chaotic and, as you would expect being a game from Llamasoft, it contains plenty of sheep.

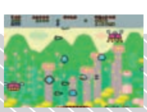
If you can't wait for *Gridrunner+++* and want to experience the brilliance that is *Gridrunner++* to whet your appetite, a five-level demo of the game is available on a free download via the Llamasoft website **www.llamasoft.co.uk/gridrunner.php**.

> **"Rather than dodging through bullet hell, you become bullet hell"** JEFF MINTER ON GRIDRUNNER+++

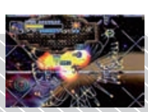
Games we'd like to see Minter makeover



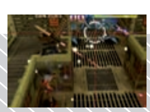
R-TYPE
Year Released: 1987
Version: Arcade



FANTASY ZONE
Year Released: 1986
Version: Arcade



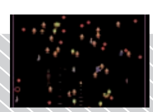
BANGAI-O
Year Released: 2000
Version: Dreamcast



SIN AND PUNISHMENT
Year Released: 2000
Version: N64



MERCS
Year Released: 1990
Version: Arcade



ROBOTRON 2084
Year Released: 1982
Version: Arcade

BUSH IS BACK

ATARI FOUNDER SUPPORTS GAMEWAGER AND BAGS HIMSELF A BAFTA



Atari forefather Nolan Bushnell is back. The genial founder of Atari, and brains behind *Pong*, *Asteroids*, and fast food chain Chuck E. Cheese is said to be making a videogame comeback through the virtual-points-mean-actual-prizes website GameWager. The site, founded in 2007, works by rewarding people points for their achievements in online gaming and these points can then be redeemed for chances to win prizes. Despite being a great idea, the website has been slow to gain backing from publishers. The platform's biggest supporter thus far seems to be Valve, but it's believed that Blizzard could be bringing the *World Of Warcraft* to the service quite soon. Nolan is said to be taking an 'executive advisor' role for the site and we're sure his backing will only help to strengthen the popularity and presence of the service.

In further news Bushnell was recently honoured by The British Academy for Film and Television (BAFTA). He picks up the academy's annual Fellowship award (which we're told has nothing to do with Hobbits) for his important contribution to the videogame industry. He joins fellow game designer Will Wright (*Sims*) as the only gaming luminary to ever pick up the prestigious honour. Bushnell will pick up his award at the British Academy Video Game Awards this March, and had this to say about being chosen to receive the prestigious award:

"I am humbled to be selected for this honour from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts," said Bushnell. "The British people are not only great game players but have historically been some of the best game creators. The pub culture and country house drawing room environments have been instrumental in spawning games and game players. "I am very grateful to receive an award from the people with a history of creating and embracing this type of entertainment."









» For a full rundown on Nolan's time at Atari check out our In The Chair interview back in issue 21.

NOLAN'S VENTURES

FROM PONG TO PIZZA, **NOLAN BUSHNELL** BUSINESS ACUMEN HAS FOUND ITS WAY INTO PLENTY OF BUSINESS IDEAS. HERE'S A QUICK RUNDOWN OF HIS MOST QUIRKY VENTURES.

CHUCK E. CHEESE'S PIZZA TIME THEATRES

In 1978, after leaving Atari, Nolan decided to mix elements of fast food, Disney and videogames into one commercial-dripped package. On paper Chuck E. Cheese's was a no brainer; a veritable paradise for kids where they could chow down on pizzas while playing on arcade games, rides, and inside indoor play zones. But when the company fell into some financial difficulties in the early Eighties, Nolan resigned from the company in 1984 and the franchise was acquired by rival restaurant chain, ShowBizPizza.

ANDROBOT INC

In 1982 Nolan would try his hand at home robotics, by harnessing the power of the microprocessor, hoping to create a series of educational robots for families – basically personal computers on wheels and scary-looking heads. It's believed that the effects of the Chuck E. Cheese's debacle had a serious repercussion on Androbot Inc, contributing to the delayed rollout of the machines. The bots were eventually released in 1984 but failed to penetrate the market; resulting in the company's closure shortly after.

UWINK RESTAURANTS

Bushnell's newest venture is spookily similar to Chuck E. Cheese's, although this time geared more towards trendy bistros. His restaurant chain uWink is a series of swanky entertainment lounges where patrons can sit down at their table, and place their order via a touch-screen terminal – thus removing the need for a waitress. Via these terminals customers can play games, watch film trailers and even check the nutritional value of their food as they wait for it to be cooked.

» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD

RETRORADAR

LAST-MINUTE NEWS



» We loved *Space Invaders Extreme*, so we have high hopes for the sequel .

TAITORRIFIC

The great news is that Taito is working on a sequel to the fantastic *Space Invaders Extreme*. Titled *Space Invaders Extreme 2*, the game is said to offer more of the same excellent retina-popping shmup action as the first game, but adds a couple of novel game modes. The first, called 'new strategic considerations', sadly we no zilch about, the second though sounds like it will find quite a following among holiday camp crowds. Why? Well, *Space Invaders* is going Bingo in a mode that is said to work is by lightning up a grid either horizontally, vertically or diagonally during the game. So expect to replace your stylus wands for tubby Bingo dabbers when the game is released in Japan this March.

THAT'S [RAIDEN] FIGHTING TALK

RAIDEN FIGHTER ACES BLASTS TO THE US



» It's been slow getting here but it looks like *Raiden Fighters Aces* is finally coming to the west.





R*aiden Fighter Aces* has been available to buy in Japan for almost a year now, but this month the great news hit that the compendium is finally gearing its assault on North America, courtesy of publisher Zoo Games. The compilation contains the three games in the *Raiden Fighters* series; a complete collection of which includes *Raiden Fighters*, *Raiden Fighters 2: Operation Hell Drive* and *Raiden Fighters Jet*.

The pack was released in Japan stores last March, ending a long hiatus for the series, and retailed for a pretty princely ¥6,800 (which is about the cost of a full-price Xbox 360 game over there). Thankfully, the game's Western publisher Zoo Games is said to be pricing the game at a more reasonable price point $29.99 when it's released in the United States. This news will obviously appease those UK shoot-'em-up fans who are either hoping to import the game or those praying each night before they go to bed that the pack finally gets a PAL release. Finger's crossed, eh?

XEVIOUS LIVES

NAMCO SURPRISES US WITH A BRAND NEW XEVIOUS UPDATE FOR PLAYSTATION HOME

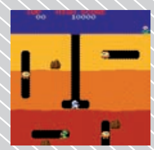


N*amco Bandai has released a new volume of its Namco Museum* series, titled *Namco Museum. Comm* (we're told the additional m is for communication) for PlayStation Home, and has been made available to download through the Asian and Japanese PlayStation store. While most Namco museum packs are often just the same old arcade rehashes released and rereleased time and time again, this particular pack is noteworthy for having something quite special up its careworn sleeve. The pack features a spanking new HD and 3D version of the classic space shmup *Xevious*, imaginatively titled *Xevious Resurrection* (the pack obviously needed some iota of predictability somewhere). And we simply can't wait to get our hands on it. So what about the rest of the pack? Well, as well as the 3D re-imagining of the classic blaster *Xevious* – although remember Namco has done the whole *3D Xevious* thing once before with *Xevious* 3D/G (which was released in the arcade and on the PSone and was actually a pretty good 3D remake). The compendium is said to also come packed with the original arcade version of *Xevious*, *Pac-Man*, the insect space blaster *Galaga*, *Dig Dug* and the pretty good top-down shooter *Dragon Spirit*. So fans of that ole museum predictability will certainly be well catered for we're sure. The pack is currently available to download in Japan and currently, at the time of going to press, there was no official word the pack would be heading to our shores. But if we hear anything, we will of course make sure that you're the first to know.



» We can't wait to get our hands on *Xevious Resurrection*. In the meantime we'll just play the original.

Included titles



DIG DUG
Year Released: 1982
Version: Arcade



DRAGON SPIRIT
Year Released: 1987
Version: Arcade

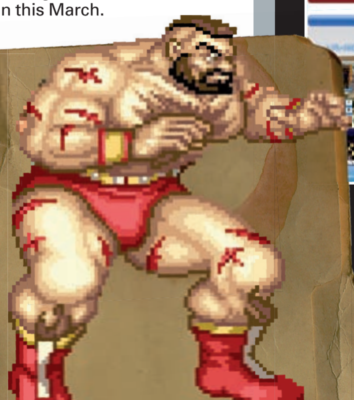


PAC-MAN
Year Released: 1980
Version: Arcade



XEVIOUS
Year Released: 1982
Version: Arcade

HERO OF THE MONTH



ZANGIEF

HERO OF THE MONTH
Every month, **Retro Gamer** looks back at a classic videogame hero or heroine. This month it's the turn of Giana Giana.

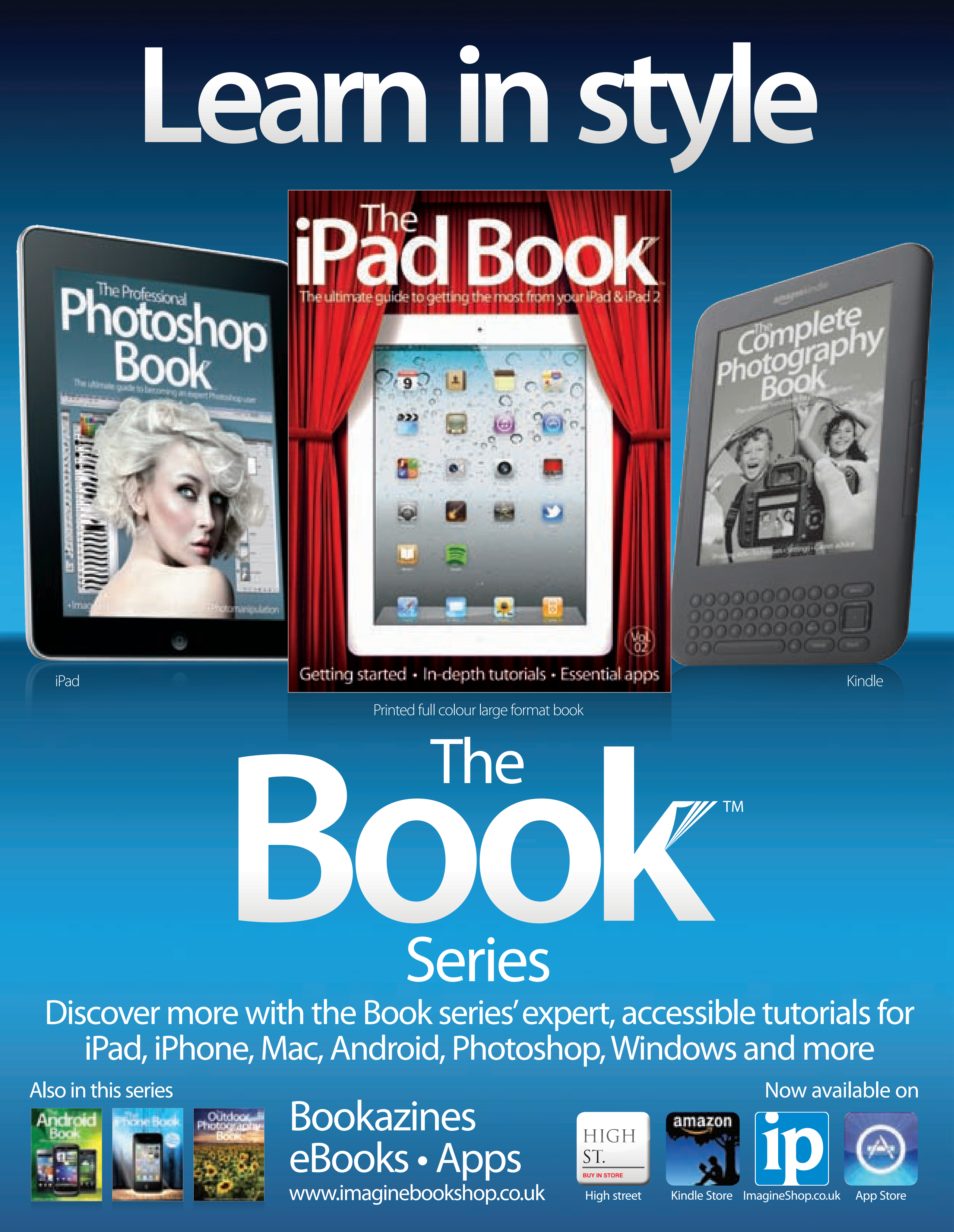
First appearance: *Street Fighter II – The World Warriors*

Weapon of choice: Spinning Piledriver

Most likely to: Wrestle bears

Least likely to: Squeeze the life out of you

Unusual fact: Zangief's nickname is the Red Cyclone.



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The iPad Book
The ultimate guide to getting the most from your iPad & iPad 2
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retro GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER
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Just because **Retro Gamer** looks to the past doesn't mean there aren't plenty of games and events to look forward to in the future. Every month we list all the exciting games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list



MARCH

GAUNTLET

Released: 7 March

Publisher: Eidos

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

We're getting a bit concerned about *Gauntlet* now. Originally due last October, the game has seemingly disappeared, despite being finished when we reviewed it back in issue 56. We've no idea why the game is taking so long to appear but we hope this doesn't mean it's in any serious trouble. Fingers crossed that it makes its new release date because it really is worth owning.



MARCH

SONIC AND THE BLACK KNIGHT

Released: 13 March

Publisher: Sega

Price: £29.99

Format: Wii

Does Sonic really need to wield a sword in his latest adventure? We worry about this as surely the next step is to give him a gun, stick him in a lowrider and get him to perform drive-by shootings on Dr Robotnik (Eggman still sounds silly to us). Still Sonic's quest for the Secret Rings turned out to be pretty good fun, so we're not losing hope just yet.



MARCH

GRAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS

Released: 27 March

Publisher: Rockstar Games

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Rockstar's *Grand Theft Auto* franchise has come a long way since its original PC inception, so we're pleased to see that *Chinatown Wars* goes back to basics. Utilising a similar top-down view that served the early games so well, it's also set to benefit from the addition of the DS's touch screen, enabling you to spread carnage in a brand new way.



MARCH

POPULOUS

Released: 27 March

Publisher: Rising Star Games

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Considering Electronic Arts owns the rights to *Populous*, it's somewhat worrying that it's not publishing one of its own games. While we've not played the Japanese version, many reviews suggested that it suffered from the same issues – fiddly controls and cramped playing area – that befell the original *SimCity DS* release. Hopefully these issues won't appear in the UK version.



MARCH

BROKEN SWORD – THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

Released: 27 March

Publisher: Ubisoft

Price: £19.99 - 29.99

Format: Wii, DS

Broken Sword is a great point-and-click adventure, so we're very excited about the prospect of replaying through it yet again. This new *Director's Cut* promises to make use of the Wii and DS's controls and will include new locations, puzzles and the ability to begin play as Nicole. This has the potential to be great and will should pave the way for similar games. Fingers crossed, eh?



APRIL

BIONIC COMMANDO

Released: 24 April

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99 - £49.99

Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

Another title that's slipped until April. Normally this could mean the kiss of death, but we're wondering if this is a purposeful move by Capcom to move it away from both *Street Fighter IV* and *Resident Evil 5*. We've not heard rumblings of any difficulties on GRIN's part, so we're hoping that this is just a tactical move from Capcom to allow the game a chance to breathe. Expect a review very soon.



APRIL

SAM & MAX: EPISODE 2

Released: 24 April

Publisher: Atari

Price: £29.99

Format: Wii

Although we didn't get around to reviewing *Episode One* of *Sam & Max*, we did manage to play it out of hours and were very pleased with the end results. *Season 2* is effectively a compilation of the PC episodes and has once again been tailor made to make use of the Wii's unique control system. It's also gut-bustingly funny to boot and with any luck we'll definately be reviewing it in a later issue.



MAY

LEISURE SUIT LARRY: BOX OFFICE BUST

Released: 29 May

Publisher: Sierra

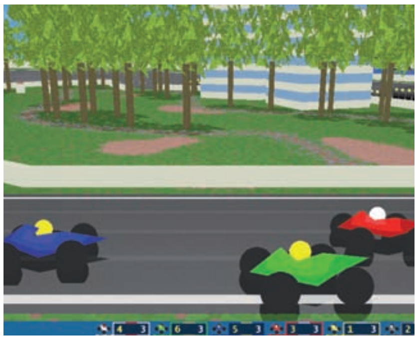
Price: £29.99 - £49.99

Format: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

We were a bit disappointed with *Magna Cum Laude* on the PlayStation, PC and Xbox, so we're hoping that the incoming *Box Office Bust* has more in common with the original games. Despite having a rude title, *Magna Cum Laude* just didn't feel as racy as Larry's earlier outings, so we're really hoping that Sierra has upped the smut levels for *Box Office Bust* and delivers something that's far naughtier.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**



» **Want to see more homebrew games appear in the magazine? Then be sure to write in and tell us about them.**

GENERALLY SPEAKING

Hello to all you Retro Gamers!
I'm writing to you for three good reasons. Firstly, I would like to comment on your excellent isometric games list in issue 59. Looking through your list (and having been a subscriber for some time now), one game has been completely missed out that I feel deserves recognition: *Flip & Flop* (by State Soft). The game is simple, a sort of *Pac-Man* meets *Q*bert*, but with a twist. I've attached a screenshot in the hope of jogging your memory – if not, I insist you go out and play it now!

The second reason is draw your attentions to the brilliant PC racing game: *GeneRally*. It's customisable and even allows players to make their own devilish tracks. Released in 2002, I reckon it can scrape in the back door of retro, and as it's free, addictive and only 1.3MB to download. I'd love to see someone adapt this for the PS3 and 360.

Thirdly, it would be really nice if there was some sort of index system in the magazine. It would be great if, when you mention a game, either in-depth or in passing, you could mention any previous magazines that may have covered/mentioned it. For example, you might say something like '*GeneRally* is in a similar vein to *Super Sprint* (see issues 03 & 15)' then people who have a passion for a particular game can seek out those issues!

Sorry for the slight criticism – well, it's not one really is it? Your magazine is so good that that is the only fault I can find! I have to say it's the only magazine I ever read front to back. I just can't get enough of it. Keep up the good work!

Take Care
Gary, email

Hi Gary, you're not the only reader to have been left a little disappointed by our isometric games feature. Although at the very start we did mention the vast amount of hair-pulling that ensued while we were trying to put the feature together. To answer your question about *Flip & Flop*: yes, we have played it, and while we do agree it's addictive, we just felt there were better games out there, so regrettably it never made it onto our list… shortlist, yes. Thanks for the suggestion to seek out *GeneRally*, by the way. It's a brilliant game. It's so good it was a last-minute addition to our homebrew reviews this month.

STAR LETTER

A CHANGE OF HEART

Dear Retro Gamer,
Just thought I'd drop my two pence worth into the debate about whether Retro Gamer devotes too much time to one format or another.

Up until fairly recently I was a casual reader of your magazine. When a new issue of Retro Gamer came out I'd pop into my local WH Smith's and flick through it. If it contained a lot of articles to do with the C64 or Amiga I would buy it – if not, I would put it back on the shelf and wait for the next issue. Then, inside one issue, I noticed there was a little flyer inside, promising me that I could subscribe to three issues of Retro Gamer for just £1, and cancel with no obligation. This appealed to the cheapskate in me, so I sent off the form with every intention of cancelling my sub after receiving the third issue.

Then a curious thing happened. Over the course of my trial subscription, I found myself enjoying reading about games or formats I didn't really know much about.

Not only did I continue my subscription after the three months, I also went off and tracked down the *Volume 2* compilation to see what I had missed. So, well done to Retro Gamer for a great magazine, and curses to your marketing department for snaring me in with its cunning plan. And to all those readers who (like I used to) read RG a bit too narrowly, look at it again and you'll find pretty much every article a fascinating read, whether you own that game/machine or not.

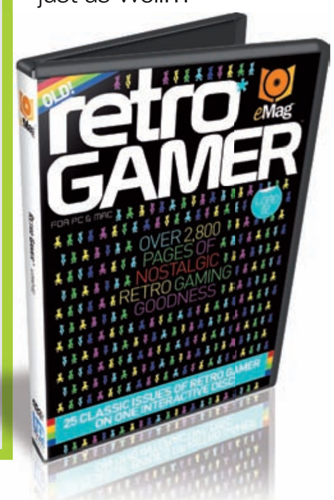
Keep up the good work!
Simon Speight

Unless you were a wealthy sheik, or your parents were oil magnates, it was impossible to own every game console released into the market as a kid. We're huge fans of the Amstrad, but that doesn't stop us from appreciating the brilliance of other machines. There were loads of cracking titles available for both the C64 and Spectrum that sadly never made it to CPC screens, and, consequently, because we never owned them as kids, we never got to experience them. So we know exactly what you mean.



WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our brand new eMag, Retro Gamer Load 2, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…



BACK ISSUES

Hello
Best wishes for 2009.



» **Arcade hits like Metal Slug and Pac-Man have proved that there's a definate place for the old classics on mobile phones. Expect a dedicated review section in the next issue.**



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Next month: Archer Maclean



BURNING QUESTION?

HAVE YOU ever had a burning question that you've always wanted to ask? Do you often sit at your computer desk wondering if David Braben will ever patch things up with Ian Bell, or if Matthew Smith checks into hotels as Miner Willy? If you do, then head on over to our forums where you can put your burning questions to whoever we're interviewing. The best questions will then get answered and revealed in the next issue. Visit the forum now at www.retrogamer.net/forum

I am from Germany and I found your magazine one month ago and I instantly ordered a subscription. But is there any way to get back issues of Retro Gamer magazine?

Best regards,

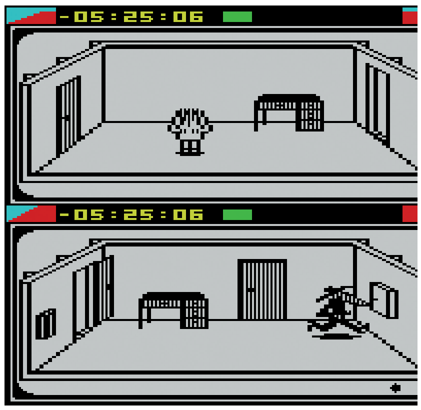
Peer Wandiger

Unfortunately Peer, we find that back issues of Retro Gamer do sell out pretty fast. In fact, at the time of writing this reply, our Christmas issue had already been cleaned out of our eShop. Failing that, you could try to find the odd back issue on eBay (although we've seen some issues of the mag fetch some pretty princely sums). The cheapest option would probably be to order a copy of the latest Retro Gamer eMag, which includes issues 31 to 55 of Retro Gamer. Sadly the first volume, which covers our first 30 issues, is currently out of stock at the moment, and unless there's a huge call to bring it back, it looks like it might stay that way. If things change we'll be sure to keep you noted, though.

CREDITS

Dear Retro Gamer,

Thanks for the excellent magazine. It costs me a small fortune to get it over here in Australia, but it's well worth it. But I do have one question: why don't you have credits in your articles? I'll often read something that's exceptionally well researched, or particularly witty and wonder which of you actually crafted it. I know who writes the Back To The Eighties/Nineties and Retro Revival sections,



If Douglas Kite was delighted to see his Spy Vs Spy profile appear on our website, imagine what will happen when he reads page 24…

but everything has no individual identity. Come out and give yourselves a pat on the back!

Tom

Hi Tom,
We do have a pretty lax approach when it comes to putting bylines in the magazine – often we just leave it up to the writer. Unless we get a large amount of people urging us to enforce them throughout the mag, we're unlikely to change the way things currently operate. Between you and us, we're sure that some of our writers enjoy having an air of mystery surrounding their work. Some probably see it as being a journalistic renegade, a chameleon dipping in and out of the pages of Retro Gamer like some kind of literary ninja. But don't go quoting us on that. Seriously.

> "Some of our writers enjoy having an air of mystery surrounding their work"

NO, THANK YOU

Dear guys,

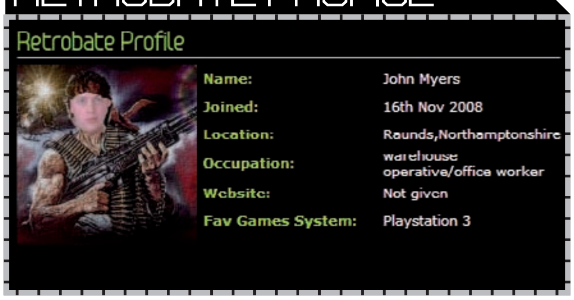
I just wanted to say a quick thank you for selecting *Spy vs. Spy* as the Retrobate Game of the Week for 12 January; while the Editor's Choice reflects on the game rather than the review, it's still most welcome to have a virtual gold trophy appear next to my Retrobate account.

While I'm typing I mustn't pass up the opportunity to offer my congratulations on the continued excellent quality of Retro Gamer itself. As many others have stated before me, this is the only title to which I subscribe, and which is devoured cover-to-cover each and every month. I'm sure it's extremely hard work, but it's definitely appreciated.

Best Regards,

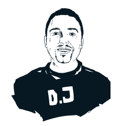
Douglas Kite

RETROBATE PROFILE



BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? Then see if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite games



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: BARBARIAN

Why I picked it: It's still one of the best one-on-one fighters around.

Handy advice: Don't use the decapitation until they're nearly dead. You'll earn more points.



High-Score: 6,700



STUART

CHOSEN GAME: FLIP & FLOP

Why I picked it: I felt guilty that we didn't acknowledge it in our Top 25 isometric games list.

Handy advice: Draw enemies into the freeze panels – it makes your life so much easier.



High-Score: 3,285



ASH

CHOSEN GAME: I'M SORRY

Why I picked it: Because Sega's bizarre *Pac-Man* variation doesn't get the attention it deserves.

Handy Advice: Try to deposit as much money as possible each time you visit the bank. You'll get a healthy multiplier for doing so.



High-Score: 325,095

From the Forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What's your favourite Tony Crowther game?

ID: Havantgottaclue
For me it would have to be *Bombuzal*. Although I always played it in 2D mode, even though the 3D view was more attractive.

ID: Dunjohn
Wacky Races on the Dreamcast! Nobody else respond!

ID: rossi46
+1 for that. After consulting the TC wiki, it's the only game of his I've played. Guess I have some catching-up to do.

ID: Seadog74
I've only played a couple so it would have to be *Fernandez Must Die*.

ID: pantal00ns
Would have to go with the *Realms Of The Haunting*, yes its filled with FMV but the good sort. Also, it's a bit unusual due to some FPS elements. It's also the only one of his games I currently own.

ID: yakmag
I have a fondness for *Gryphon*, featuring the trademark Crowther chunky sprites. Never did finish it, though.

ID: TMR
It's got to be *Phobia* for me. It might have been buggy, but it's probably one of the most underrated C64 shoot-'em-ups going.

ID: zerocool
Captive 2 was bordering on genius... one of my faves, but I also remember loving *Wacky Racers* on the Dreamcast. I had no idea he did *Battlefield 2* – bloody amazing game! Go, Tony!

ID: andrew_rollings
Gryphon. I've never played it, and only ever saw it running in the computer shop... However, it's the only C64 game I ever saw that made me wish I owned one. It looked awesome.

ID: Dark Reaper
Captain Planet And The Planeteers for me, I'm afraid. While the game itself is a steaming pile of environmentally friendly fertilizer, it was one of the games that came with my Amiga 500, so it brings back happy memories of a simpler time.

ID: Revgiblet
For me it has to be Knightmare. That was a great use of a licence.

ID: NonShinyGoose
I remember playing a demo of *Bombuzal* on the Amiga until the disk melted*
*May not be true.

ID: Heavy Stylus
I was blown away by *Liberation: Captive 2* on the CD32, and like some of the others here I have fond memories of *Bombuzal* too.

Shinobi
Blagger as it's the only game I knew he done other than that talking *Train Game* on the C64...*Realms Of The Haunting* is fab.

Sherringford Hovis
Captive! And I most certainly was, literally playing it for hours on end. My first ever experience of RSI, clicking the mouse button a millions times and hour! Escaping after setting off the explosion was always the bit that did it for me; my sense of direction is so poor I easily get lost in my own back garden, so imagine the panic of legging it back to an exit and trying to remember the combination. I was insanely jealous of CD32 owners since I never got a chance to play *Captive 2: Liberation* – I couldn't afford to fork out for the machine.

gmintyfresh
I must admit that I've only actually played *Monty*, which I loved, so I'll have to say *Monty* – being from up t'North and all.

Muralbat
Could it be anything else other than *Wacky Races*? But maybe I'm just a sucker for vibrant colours!

Zetr0
I see a lot of people fighting the *real* truth that *Captive* is simply the best game ever produced. Let it be said by any one person. Vote *Captive*, it makes sense.

PubZombie
Difficult one, I have some of the C64 originals, but I was never really into them. *Captive* and *Captive 2* were great but I have played *Battlefield* more than any of them. It's not retro, but for me it's the best for once.

Naitch
He made some good games, and my favourites would probably be the fantastic *Wanted: Monty Mole* and *Knightmare*.

ramanista
Now this may be something of a strange answer, but *Captain Planet*, it arrived in the same month as my Amiga, so I was still wowed by the new possibilities.

YOUR OPINION PLEASE!

BRING BACK

tekaotaku *Puggsy* – loved that little alien guy. Or how about *Kolibri*, the eco wasp-fighting humming bird?

Liveinabin Doshin The Giant, loved his big wobbly arms.

Holpil *Plok!* Aha, no. On second thoughts, yeah, *Plok* was great. 2009 could be the year for *Plok HD*.

HEAVYface *Rocket Knight* is awesome. Also, shouts for *Strider*, *Unknown Soldier* (*Forgotten Worlds*), *Strider*, *Hero Tonma*... and finally, *Strider*.

aztecca Freddy Hardest from the CPC games – recommend to anyone who hasn't played them to do it now.

Urbanator *Dizzy*. Would love Codemasters to make another one of those games

liveinabin Not that we don't already have more than enough *Star Wars* games, but I'd like to see Bastilla Shan from the *Knights Of The Old Republic* reused for another game. She was a really good character (far better than most of the rubbish Lucas thinks up himself).

BREAK STUFF

station I seem to remember my Amstrad CPC's keyboard being concave by a good inch from the amount of times I slammed my fist down onto it – those 8-bit games were very unforgiving.

FatTrucker I had several controllers with teeth marks in them, I've thrown cartridges across the room, in the bin (and later retrieved them like a sullen junky), snapped tapes in half and once came within inches of throwing my CPC down the stairs.

felgekarp I once saw my mate take a big bite into his rubber key Speccy and on another occasion rip the stick off his joystick... Well, I say his joystick, it was actually one I'd lent him, the git.

Ack Hate to say it, but I once got so mad at my copy of *Super Mario 64*, I bit the cartridge. After falling off the same cliff five times in a row, I killed the power, pulled the cart out, and growled at it before biting it. Then I head-butted it.

GOOD RINGTONES

bonerlaw Got Ken's stage music as my ringtone, *Pac-Man* dying as my text alert and my favourite; the *Speedball 2* as my alarm music! Makes me get up in the morning without hesitation!

Sir Arthur I have *Bubble Bobble* and *Space Harrier* on my phone, with "Welcome To The Fantasy Zone, Get Ready" as my text alert.

firebreather I fancy having the *Gyruss* tune as a ringtone, might be possible as I think it just jazzed up Mozart.

JetSetWilly The music and the little alert sound that plays when you've been discovered in *MGS*. I did have DCI Gene Hunt saying, "Don't move, you're surrounded by armed bastards!" which gives me chuckle when it goes off in a packed shopping centre.

Old vs NEW

Each month we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month it's Mortal Kombat 2 against DC Universe

Mortal Kombat 2



Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe



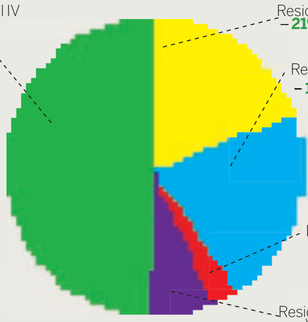
82% | 17%

TheDude18 "You weak, pathetic fool!" *MK2* by a mile.

Darthhelmet *Mk vs DCU* – I can finish it without cheating!

HOT TOPIC

Itchy... tasty... what's your favourite Resident Evil game? Brains... blood... corn syrup... here are the results



"The original is amazing. It invokes such a claustrophobic feel that others have tried and achieved to a small success (*Nemesis* in *RE3*). Also, there's no other character than Barry Burton." **– TyronW**

"*Resident Evil 2* for me. I loved it; great storyline, very gory and expanded on the original without destroying the creepiness." **– sirclive1**

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Thanks for the email, Doug. If you're pleased about your review appearing in the Editor's Choice section on our website, you're likely have a fit when you discover that one of your reviews has also been selected to appear in your favourite magazine – this very issue, in fact. Thanks to everybody who contributes to reviews on our website; we do appreciate your efforts. While we might not have the time to comment on every entry, we really do enjoy reading what you have to say about your favourite games.

HOW 2

Hiya guys,

First off, can I just say: superb mag. I have around 25 issues of RG and have a subscription… all your mags are on my loo floor, ideal for reading while on the loo (this has no reflection on your mag) or in the bath)! Anyway, I have a very quick question that I have always wanted answering, but as most of the old-school mags (that I still collect and read!) are now defunct, I can't get in touch with them to ask… Therefore, you are the obvious choice. In old mags (*MEGA*, *Sega Power*, *Super Play*, *GB Action* etc.) how did the magazines actually take screenshots? I can understand in the old Amiga/ST Mags that they could simply screen dump the desired shot and write the mag on that hardware, but in the old days before emulators and the net, how did magazines get such good quality screenshots of games for reviews? My only guess is the shots were sent in from software houses themselves (but then surely all the magazines would have the same/similar screenshots?). If one of you could reply and give me a very quick answer – that would be much appreciated… it's been driving me nuts!

Cheers,

Charlie

Hey Charlie, as well as the screen dump method you mention in your email, magazines would get their screenshots in variety of ways. The first would be to speak to the game developer/publisher and request the assets directly – although you do run the risk of printing the same pictures in rival magazines. Another would be to use a piece of kit we use here called an S-Video lead and the grabbing hardware (but this would only work on consoles that have S-Video ports). Back in the early days, of course, magazines would simply take a photograph of the game running on their telly/monitor, or hire someone to do a brass rubbing.



Eternal gratitude to whichever reader is able to make us the equivalent Amstrad CPC bookmark. Failing that one with *Strider* on would go down equally well.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Fight! Fight!

This month we've been discussing who would win in a sanctioned bar fight between Tony Crowther and Jon Hare. Having met Jon for our 'In the Chair' interview this month, Stuart believes Jon would harness the power from barstools and frozen pork scratchings to claim a victory. Darran, on the other hand, thinks Tony, by applying all the art of war he learnt while working on *Battlefield 2*, would go all 'John Rambo' and bring home the bacon. Stephen thinks it would be a dead tie.

BOOKMARKED

Dear Retro Gamer,

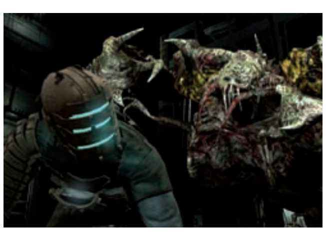
Check out this Commodore 64 bookmark that my wife made for me. She secretly stitched it while looking at pictures in the C64 User Guide. I'm glad I have those things lying around in my house. Thanks for a great magazine, by the way.

Kertis Henderson, North Carolina, USA.

We only wish our better halves could stitch us brilliant things. By the way Kertis, if your wife ever decides to stitch you an Amstrad bookmark (What? It might happen!) and you decide you've no need for it (more probable), feel free to post it our way and we promise it'll be put to good use.

> "Check out this Commodore 64 bookmark that my wife made for me…"

CURRENTLY PLAYING





DARRAN

Dead Space

It's taken me 35 hours, but I've managed to get every trophy on *Dead Space* – yes, even the one that requires you to complete the game on Impossible Mode. It makes me either incredibly accomplished or just really, really sad…





STUART

R-Type Final

Having been reminded of how much of a blast *R-Type Final* is, I couldn't help but push my Dreamcast and 360 aside, like a spoilt brat, and hook up my PS2 to play it on. While the game is still amazing, it did remind me how rubbish I am at it.





ASH

R-Type Dimensions

At 1200 Microsoft Points, this update of *R-Type I* and *II* is a little bit pricy but it's still one of the best examples of retro goodness on Xbox Live Arcade, so I'll let it off. Switching between 2D and 3D looks ace.

retro GAMER

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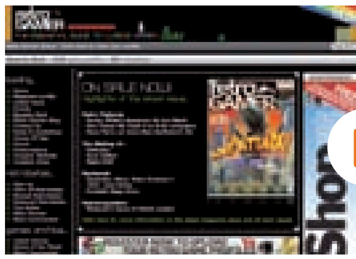
IMAGINE PUBLISHING

BARGAIN HUNT

DESPERATE TO FINISH OFF YOUR RETRO COLLECTION? WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ALL THE BEST BARGAINS BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO? THEN VISIT **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/BARGAIN_HUNT.PHP** AND DISCOVER ALL THE CLASSIC MACHINES THAT YOU'LL EVER NEED

You've been asking for it forever, but we're pleased to announce a brand new look for **Retro Gamer**'s Buyer's Guide section that makes it incredibly easy to get your hands on all the best retro bargains.

Using our new search engine couldn't be easier, as all you need to do is select a manufacturer and machine from the pull-down menu. Once you've found the system you're after the magic of the internet will search eBay for the top 20 ending items, meaning that you'll be able to gauge the market's health with very little effort. This month, Darran's been restocking his Lynx collection.



Head on over to the excellent **retrogamer.net** and click on 'Bargain Hunt' or visit **www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php**



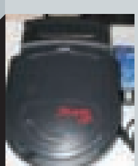
Put in the details for the greatest computer in the world and discuss with your staff writer why it's so much better than the ZX Spectrum.



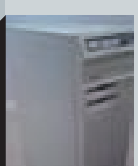
Swoon in delight as you find yourself getting ever closer to collecting all the £1.99 *Simulator* games that Codemasters ever released.

EBAY BARGAINS

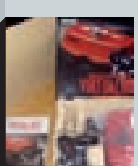
Retro Gamer has been scouring the world's most popular auction site, to find the best bargains out there…



■ Not very easy to come by now, this Jag CD was going for a pretty reasonable £100 with a copy of launch videogame *Blue Lightning*.



■ Not many Amiga 3000's were made by Commodore – particularly in this Tower style – hence why this was going for a staggering £260.



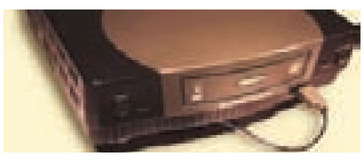
■ The Virtual Boy might resemble eye test apparatus but this machine – selling for £199 – is still a wonderful addition to any collection.



■ This pristine Japanese Mega Jet – basically a mini Mega Drive that relies on you being somewhere with a TV set – was going for $199 in the US.

3DO

3DO GOLDSTAR	£45+ ($81+)
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)	£40+ ($74+)
PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)	£20+ ($37+)



ACORN

ARCHIMEDES	£30 ($55)
ATOM	£50 ($92)
ACORN ELECTRON	£10 ($18)
BBC MICRO	£15 ($28)



AMSTRAD

CPC 464	£10+ ($18+)
CPC 664	£90+ ($165+)
CPC 6128	£25+ ($46+)
GX4000	£50+ ($92+)

APPLE

APPLE II	£30+ ($55+)

ATARI

400/800/600XL/XE	£20+ ($37+)
2600 (VCS)	£20+ ($37+)
5200	£30 ($55)
7800	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR CD	£70 ($129)
LYNX I/II	£20+ ($37+)
ST	£20+ ($37+)

BANDAI

GUNDAM RX-78	£75+ ($138+)
PLAYDIA	£90 ($166)
PIPPIN (ATMARK)	£500+ ($921+)
WONDERSWAN	£10 ($18)
WONDERSWAN COLOR	£20 ($37)
WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL	£25 ($46)



COMMODORE

AMIGA 500/600/1200	£20+ ($37+)
C16/PLUS/4	£15+ ($28+)
C64	£10+ ($18+)
C64 GS	£30+ ($55+)
C128	£30+ ($55+)
CDTV	£20 ($37)
CD32	£25 ($46)
VIC-20	£10+ ($18+)



FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM	£100+ ($184+)
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY	£200+ ($368+)



MISCELLANEOUS

BALLY ASTROCADE	£20 ($37)
BARCODE BATTLER	£5 ($18)
CASIO LOOPY	£25 ($46)
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F	£10 ($18)
COLECOVISION	£30 ($55)
DRAGON 32/64	£8 ($15)
ARCADIA 2001	£10 ($18)
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION	£20 ($37)
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION	£30 ($55)
INTELLIVISION	£40+ ($74+)
ODYSSEY	£10 ($18)
ORIC-1	£20 ($37)
PLAYSTATION	£10 ($18)
SAM COUPÉ	£50-£200 ($92-$368)
SUPERVISION	£15 ($28)
TIGER ELEC GAME.COM	£15 ($28)
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)	£10 ($18)
VECTREX (MB/GCE)	£80 ($147)
X68000	£90+ ($166+)

MSX

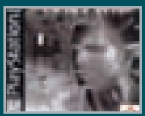
MSX 1	£10+ ($18+)
MSX 2	£20+ ($37+)
MSX 2+	£30+ ($55+)
MSX TURBO R	£30+ ($55+)

NEC

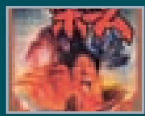
PC-6###	£10+ ($18+)

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer sifts through the pages of eBay to report back on any items of interest, hardware or software, that caught our eyes. This month we've been looking for survival horror games.



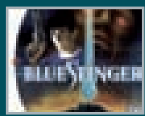
SILENT HILL
System: **PSone**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£16.47**



SWEET HOME
System: **NES**
Normally sells for **£59.99**
Ended at **$62**



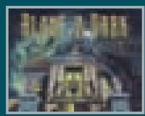
CLOCK TOWER
System: **PSone**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£15**



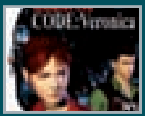
BLUE STINGER
System: **Dreamcast**
Normally sells for **£4.99**
Ended at **£3.50**



RESIDENT EVIL
System: **PSone**
Normally sells for **£2**
Ended at **£1.29**



ALONE IN THE DARK
System: **PC**
Normally sells for **£2**
Ended at **£3.50**



RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA
System: **Dreamcast**
Normally sells for **£12**
Ended at **£8.99**



NIGHTMARE CREATURES
System: **PSone**
Normally sells for **£4.99**
Ended at **£6.18**

PC-8801	**£20 ($37)**
PC-9801	**£35 ($65)**
PC-FX	**£50 ($92)**
PC-ENGINE	**£55 ($101)**
PC-ENGINE GT	**£70+ ($129+)**
TURBOGRAFX-16	**£30 ($55)**
TURBO EXPRESS	**£50 ($92)**
SUPERGRAFX	**£80 ($147)**
PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBOGRAFX CD	**£50+ ($92+)**
PC-E DUO/ TURBO DUO	**£120 ($221)**
DUO-R	**£80 ($147)**

NINTENDO

FAMICOM	**£60 ($111)**
FAMICOM AV	**£40 ($74)**
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM	**£70 ($129)**
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN	**£100 ($184)**
GAME & WATCH	**£1+ ($2+)**
GAME BOY B/W	**£5 ($9)**
GAME BOY POCKET	**£8 ($15)**
GAME BOY COLOR	**£12 ($22)**
GAME BOY ADVANCE	**£25 ($46)**
N64	**£10 ($18)**
N64 DD	**£150+ ($276+)**
NES (TOASTER)	**£15 ($28)**
NES (DOG BONE)	**£50 ($92)**
SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)	**£20 ($37)**
SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)	**£50+ ($92+)**
VIRTUAL BOY	**£80 ($147)**



PHILIPS

CD-I	**£20+ ($37+)**
CD-I 450/500	**£30 ($55)**
VIDEOPAC G7000	**£10 ($18)**
VIDEOPAC G7400	**£20 ($37)**

SEGA

32X	**£35 ($65)**
DREAMCAST	**£25 ($46)**
GAME GEAR	**£15 ($28)**
SG-1000	**£50-£150 ($80-$260)**
SC-3000	**£50 ($92)**
MASTER SYSTEM I/II	**£10 ($18)**



AMSTRAD MEGA PC	**£10 ($18)**
TERADRIVE	**£100 ($184)**
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II	**£25 ($46)**
GENESIS 3	**£35 ($65)**
NOMAD	**£100 ($184)**
MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE	**£100+ ($184+)**
MEGA-CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**
PICO	**£20 ($37)**
SATURN	**£30 ($55)**
MEGA CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**

SINCLAIR

ZX80	**£200 ($368)**
ZX81	**£70 ($129)**
ZX SPECTRUM 48K	**£10 ($18)**
ZX SPECTRUM 128K	**£40 ($74)**
ZX SPECTRUM+	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +2	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +3	**£40 ($74)**

SNK

NEO-GEO AES	**£150+ ($276+)**
NEO-GEO MVS	**£70 ($129)**
NEO-GEO CD	**£100 ($184)**
NEO-GEO CDZ	**£80+ ($147+)**
NEO-GEO POCKET	**£20 ($37)**
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR	**£35 ($65)**

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

THIS ISSUE WE SPEAK TO FRAZER RHODES, WHO BOASTS A NEO GEO COLLECTION THAT WE'RE IMMENSELY JEALOUS OF. WE'RE PRETTY SURE A FEW OF YOU WILL BE AS WELL



» I'm Frazer Rhodes and I'm 30 years old. I'm only five games away from a complete Japanese Neo Geo Collection.



» My Neo Geo games have been sourced from various places including eBay, neo-geo.com and import specialists in the UK such as Videogameimports.com. Trips to Japan in 2006 and 2007 certainly helped with sourcing some of the rarer titles in Akihabara and Nakano Broadway.



» Unlike some collectors I do play these games, my favourites are: *Metal Slug, Big Tournament Golf, Pulstar, Blazing Star, Magician Lord*, and *Baseball Stars 2*.



» Some of the older titles such as *Magician Lord, Nam-1975* and *Viewpointare* still damn good games even though they are close to being 20 years old now.



» I hope to pick up the final five games, *Master Of Syougi, Rage Of The Dragons, Matrimelee, OverTop* and *Chibi Quiz* in 2009. If anyone out there has a copy for sale then please let me know!



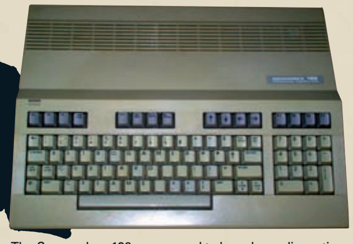
If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about then contact us at **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk** and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM AUGUST 1986



AUGUST 1986 – New Commodore micro, new Amstrad/ Spectrum micro, new CPC fanzine, new name for Splitting Images, new city for Mercenary and a new attempt at recreating Scooby Doo. Richard Burton takes a look while trying to avoid those pesky kids…



» The Commodore 128 – rumoured to have been discontinued after just one year in production.

Commodore was doing a sterling job of confusing its suppliers and customers with news that it would be releasing its new micro, the C64c at the Personal Computer World show in September. The new machine would be similar in design to the C128, but functionally the same as the original bull-nosed C64.

However, Commodore was also denying rumours it had decided to drop the C128 after just a year in production, even though several large high street retailers were discounting their remaining stocks of the machine at £169.

So, with the new C64c costing £249 in a bundle package that included a restyled disk drive, the C128 available for less money and the original C64 priced at £99, the C64c looked to be fighting an uphill battle before it had even put in an appearance.

With the company essentially in competition with itself for sales, the news that Amstrad was ready to unveil the new Spectrum Plus 2 at the same PCW show must have felt like a kick in the teeth for Commodore.

Amstrad's newest addition to the Sinclair family of micros would be more in keeping with its own CPC range, featuring a built-in tape deck, a keyboard and joystick and Midi ports, all for £149.



» *WACCI*, the longest running Amstrad CPC magazine, started life in the letters page of *PCW* and continued for a further 20 years.



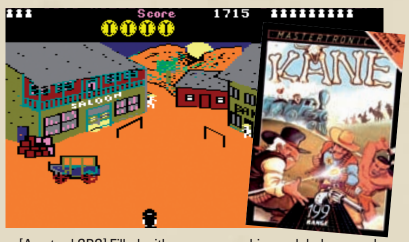
» [Amstrad CPC] *Pacific*: The perfect way to sample deep sea diving without the hassle of getting wet or suffocating.

Those publicity-shy guys at Domark were once again grabbing the headlines for both good and bad reasons this month. Good news came in the form of the imminent release of its Trivial Pursuit board game conversion. With the added novelty value of graphical and musical questions, it was set to win over a whole new audience of fans.

What was bad for Domark was that it had to rename its celebrity jigsaw puzzle game *Splitting Images* to *Split Personalities*, after the creators of the *Spitting Image* television show suffered a catastrophic humour bypass and stamped their feet in outrage.

Although several hundred copies of the game were released under the *Splitting Images* name, most were recalled and the name promptly changed to diffuse any potential legal proceedings. Oddly, two years later Domark would be responsible for developing the official *Spitting Image* game that failed to be as good as *Split Personalities*.

Mercenary from Novagen was superb and creator Paul Woakes is a genius. So, what do you do with your hit game once the sales have died down a bit? You redesign the city of Targ and release a new expansion pack for the game calling it *Mercenary: The Second City*. Being a bolt-on package, you would need the original release to play it… pure genius.



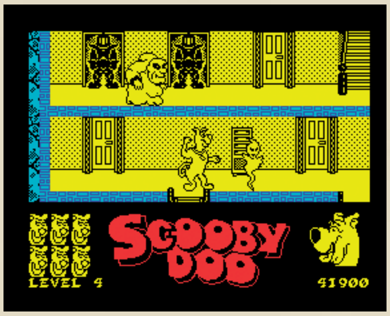
» [Amstrad CPC] Filled with average graphics and dodgy sound, *Kane* still managed to entertain with its varied levels.

You could visit the *Second City* on the Spectrum, C64, Commodore Plus 4 and Atari 8-bit machines for £5.95.

Alligata decided that Eighties kids really wanted to try their hand at pub sports rather than blasting aliens, so released the imaginatively titled *Pub Games* that would let you try darts, dominoes and bar skittles amongst others.

US Gold revealed it was developing Atari's hit arcade game, *Gauntlet*, to almost every popular home micro. Surprisingly, the company responsible for coding it for them was rival software house Gremlin Graphics. That might explain why it turned out that much better than the usual US Gold conversions…

Elite Systems had been hyping its highly anticipated game based on the cartoon *Scooby Doo*. It had been advertised for almost a year and was said to contain some fantastic graphics, with Elite describing it as the "first ever computer cartoon."



» [ZX Spectrum] After a false start, Elite scaled down its plans for *Scooby* and let Gargoyle sort it out instead.



» [Commodore 64] There's only one thing to do when cornered by hordes of ghosts in *Gauntlet*… run like stink.

1986

AUGUST NEWS



» The new Space Shuttle, built to replace Challenger, had a few design differences to the other space craft…

21 August saw 1,746 people killed in Cameroon when, at that time, an unexplained gas eruption from Lake Nyos suffocated everyone in a 20km radius. After a lengthy investigation it was found that carbon dioxide was responsible due to a rare natural phenomenon known as lake overturn, of which this was only the second recorded instance. When a lake is saturated with carbon dioxide, usually due to nearby volcanic activity, the lake becomes highly unstable. Lake Nyos displaced about 80 million cubic metres of carbon dioxide when a landslide set the eruption off.

15 August and President Reagan announced plans to replace the Space Shuttle Challenger, which exploded shortly after take-off in January, with a newly constructed shuttle.



» Lake Nyos is beautiful to look at now, 23 year ago it was the scene of a deadly gas eruption that killed entire villages.

At 11.12pm on 31 August, the Soviet cruise liner Admiral Nakhimov was hit by an 18,600 ton freighter an hour into its voyage. The impact of the freighter tore a 900-square-foot hole in the starboard side of the liner, causing the ship to list immediately. Due to the timing of the incident, most passengers were asleep. Unfortunately all lighting was disabled and the backup generator failed within two minutes. The cruise liner sunk completely within seven minutes of being struck, leaving 423 passengers and crew dead.

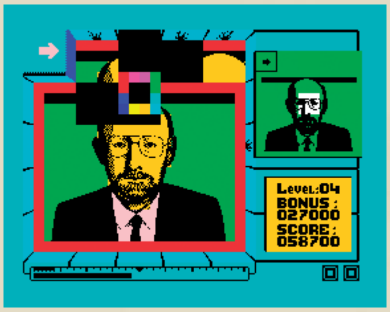


» [ZX Spectrum] Your reward for beating Sam? Digitised boobs. Still, that was gold dust for a ten-year old…

The game was to be played in a *Dragon's Lair* style; pick a route/make a decision and stand back to see what happens. Unfortunately, the title was scrapped as it was simply too elaborate for 8-bit systems to cope with.

Gargoyle Games was called in to develop a new *Scooby Doo* game for Elite that proved to be more in keeping with the Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad's capabilities and was a big hit.

The start of the longest-running Amstrad CPC magazine began with a rather innocuous letter in the pages of *Popular Computing Weekly*. Jeff Walker tentatively wrote to *PCW* asking for help and contributions to start a CPC club. Within six weeks the first issue of *WACCI* was available, initially on a C60 cassette with a printed option available for a few quid extra. *WACCI* continued to feed CPC owners irreverent articles with a technical bent for the next 20 years.



» [ZX Spectrum] It's not often you get the chance to play around with Reagan's face or Sir Clive's ears… Thanks *Splitting Images*.

In the reviews sections of the games magazines, games were being condemned and rewarded in equal measure. *Amtix* readers were treated to a trio of *Amtix Accolades* with *Cauldron II* (Palace Software), *Harvey Headbanger* (Firebird) and *Nodes Of Yesod* (Odin). Not so great was *Barchou* (Central Solutions), which received a dishonourable mention for managing to scrape an overall score of just 8%. Very well done.

CPC magazine rivals, *Amstrad Action*, gave its equivalent 'AA Rave' status to *Kane* (Mastertronic), *Biggles* (Mirrorsoft), *Pacific* (PSS), *Cauldron II* (Palace Software), *Green Beret* (Imagine), *Molecule Man* (Mastertronic) and for the *PCW* owners, *Batman* (Ocean). *Knight Tyme* (Mastertronic) was top dog receiving *AA*'s 'Mastergame' award for August.

Crash were 'Smashing' several Spectrum games including *Bobby Bearing* (The Edge), *Heartland* (Firebird/Odin), *Rebelstar* (Firebird), *Cauldron II* (Palace Software) and *Pyracurse* (Hewson Consultants).

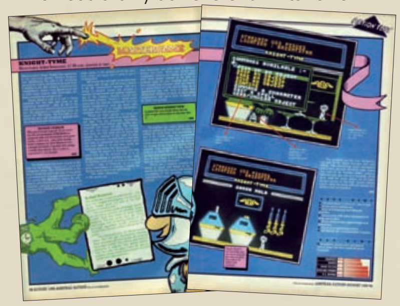
Meanwhile, over at C64 magazine *Zzap*, just four games were granted everlasting 'Sizzledom'; *Green Beret* (Imagine), *Tau Ceti* (CRL), *Kik Start II* (Mastertronic) and *Infiltrator* (US Gold/Mindscape). Sadly nothing was good enough to warrant the award of a Gold Medal, not even *Samantha Fox Strip Poker* (Martech), which bagged a lowly 16%. Go on Foxy, take off another digitised sock…

THIS MONTH IN…

AMSTRAD ACTION



AA's game of the month was something of a landmark event with *Knight Tyme* from Mastertronic becoming the first budget title to achieve the lofty heights of 'Mastergame' status. The budget game made a mockery of US Gold's full price gaming turd, *World Cup Carnival*, which could only achieve 0% in its review.



SINCLAIR USER



Sinclair User featured an interview with Sir Clive about Amstrad buying the rights to his beloved Spectrum and also gave us an insight into the mysterious Super Spectrum that he was developing. The Loki promised good things, but became part of the Amstrad deal. Still, there was always Pandora…



COMPUTER & VIDEOGAMES



C&VG took a look at the French company Infogrames. The mag asked the team about where their future lay as well as discussing some of its recent high-flying titles released in the UK, such as *Get Dexter*, *Doomsday Blues* and *Pacific* with new release, *Mandragore*, coming soon…



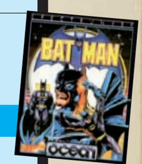
CHARTS

AUGUST 1986

MUSIC

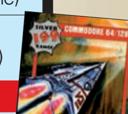
1. The Lady In Red (Chris De Burgh)
2. So Macho (Sinitta)
3. I Want To Wake Up With You (Boris Gardiner)
4. Camouflage (Stan Ridgway)
5. Ain't Nothing Goin' On But The Rent (Gwen Guthrie)





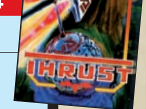
SPECTRUM

1. Batman (Ocean)
2. World Cup Carnival (US Gold)
3. Knight Tyme (Mastertronic)
4. Green Beret (Imagine)
5. Rock 'N' Wrestle (Melbourne House)



COMMODORE 64

1. Thrust (Firebird)
2. International Karate (System 3)
3. World Cup Carnival (US Gold)
4. Spindizzy (Electric Dreams)
5. Formula One Simulator (Mastertronic)



AMSTRAD

1. Winter Games (Epyx/US Gold)
2. Batman (Ocean)
3. Commando (Elite)
4. They Sold A Million 2 (Hit Squad)
5. Get Dexter (PSS)



BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM AUGUST 1991



AUGUST 1991 – Commodore admits cock-ups, SNES debuts, budget games go up, Rod-Land goes cute, Road Rash and OutRun Europa appear in a blaze of skid marks and Terminator 2 arrives. Richard Burton needs your clothes, your boots and your Vectrex collection…



» Newly released in the US of A, the Super Nintendo complete with square edges and big purple buttons.

Steve Franklin, the Managing Director of Commodore in the United Kingdom, hit the headlines for a refreshingly frank and forthright interview that he gave to *The Independent* newspaper. In it he quite openly blasted some of his own decisions while at the helm of Commodore, stating in no uncertain terms that, "we cocked it up in the UK".

He highlighted three particularly disastrous business decisions that stuck in his mind. First was the ill-fated C64GS console. Pressurised into entering the booming console market, Commodore converted its C64 into a console and manufactured 80,000 units for the UK at £99 a pop. It sold only 15,000.

A £499 Amiga bundle sponsored by British Airways, which included software and Air Miles, bombed spectacularly, too. Commodore made 25,000 bundles, which cost them £120,000 for the Air Miles alone. Only 5,000 units were sold.

And finally, a C64 Home Entertainment pack, which contained a personal stereo and guitar synthesiser, fared little better with only 7,000 selling out of the 25,000 made.

Even after those dodgy dealings, Commodore remained in profit with Franklin taking much of the credit for that with many more good decisions than bad ones.

Nintendo's much vaunted Super Nintendo Entertainment System finally arrived in America in an official capacity. Costing $199, it came packed with *Super Mario World* and became an instant success, in no small part to the game itself.



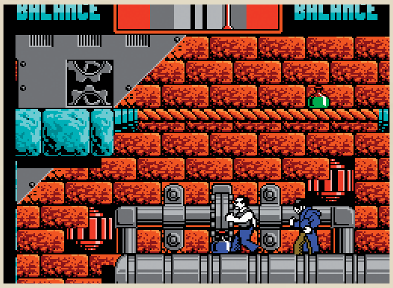
» [Amiga] *Operation Wolf* meets *Dawn Of The Dead*. Sounded good but *Beast Busters* wasn't.

A handful of other games were also available at launch including *Gradius III*, *F-Zero* and *Pilotwings,* which demonstrated early examples of the SNES's Mode 7 – the pseudo 3D graphics and texture mapping mode that could only handle background graphics but to superb effect.

Software houses and distributors alike were busy pointing fingers at each other for a rise in the price of 8-bit budget software to £3.99. Somewhat bizarrely, no one seemed to know where the price came from, with both sides blaming each other.

The distributors insist that the £3.99 price tag had been recommended to them by the software houses. They counter claimed that the distributors are the ones dictating the price and that software houses had to follow suit. It seemed the price hike would be mutually beneficial to both parties, while annoying 8-bit micro owners in the process, yet no one wanted to shoulder the blame for the increase.

Storm Software, who could count *SWIV* and *St Dragon* among its previous releases, revealed it was set to release its conversion of the arcade platform game *Rodland*. Featuring



» [NES] *Darkman* was just one of a multitude of movie tie-ins Ocean Software was busily developing for the console market.





» [Mega Drive] Not just a gaming great but *Sonic the Hedgehog* also helped cement Sega's profit margin no end.

a fairy village overrun with demons after the kidnapping of your fairy mum, you play the part of either Rit or Tam, the two girly fairies out to mash a few demon heads with their large rods. Ooer.

Borrowing heavily from the *Bubble Bobble* school of fluffy games, *Rodland* proved to be a superb offering, hugely playable with great graphics, albeit nauseatingly cutesy to the point of gagging. Still, it proved to be a roaring success on every format it was released on: the Amiga, C64, Spectrum and Amstrad – although the £11.99 price tag for the 8-bit versions must've raised an eyebrow or two.

Electronic Arts treated gamers to a glimpse of its forthcoming Mega Drive release due out in September. *Road Rash* was a motorbike racing game that looked like any other biker game from a distance but was so much more than that. The biggest (and best) difference was the opportunity to swing punches at your opponents or grab a weapon, be it a crowbar or chain, and give them a right royal lamping with it in mid-race.





» [Mega Drive] Being punched at 180mph while being nobbled by a crowbar – that's *Road Rash* in a nutshell.

THIS MONTH IN... CHARTS

1991

AUGUST NEWS



8 August saw the release of Britain's longest held hostage, journalist John McCarthy, who had been held in the Lebanon for over five years by the militant group Islamic Jihad.

18 August saw turmoil in the Soviet Union and Baltic States as Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev was overthrown in a coup by Soviet hardliners. Russian Federation president, Boris Yeltsin, spoke out against the coup asking for civilian resistance to the takeover. Several demonstrations took place outside Russian Parliament buildings and by the 21 August the coup was over.

However, this signalled the end of the Soviet Union. By mid-December all but one of the republics had gained independence from the Soviet Union. Gorbachev resigned on Christmas Day and the following day the Supreme Soviet dissolved the USSR.

» Premiering across the UK this month was Terminator 2. Unfortunately Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II was as well…

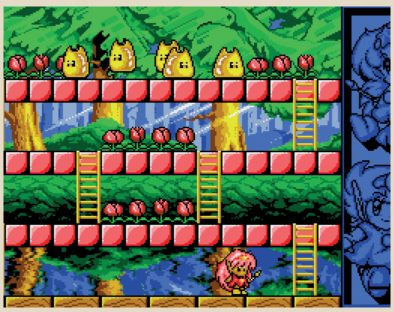


» John McCarthy is released after being held hostage for over five years in Beirut. He's justifiably happy about that…

16 August saw the premiere of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* in the UK. Featuring Arnie and a huge effects budget, the movie was superb. Shame about the ever whining Edward Furlong though…



» [SNES] Stop press! Movie licensed tie-in game in not very good videogame conversion shocker!



» [Amiga]: It maybe stomach-churningly cutesy but *Rod-Land* is also downright playable. A fantastic platform game.

If trying to avoid being decked by a haymaker wasn't enough, there was always the danger of a face full of udders should you hit any of the stray cattle on and around the roads. The cherry on the top was the soundtrack supplied by the always excellent Rob Hubbard. *Road Rash* would set you back £40 but would be worth every single penny.

Ocean Software had a small mountain of work in progress, most of which was announced with demonstrations at the Consumer Electronics Show in the USA. Under development was the SNES version *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* based on the forthcoming Arnold Schwarenegger-starring blockbuster movie.

Also being developed was a handful of movie-licensed titles, some good, some not so clever. *Hudson Hawk*, *The Addams Family*, *Hook*, *Darkman* and *RoboCop 2* were all being worked on for the NES and a whole swath of home micro versions.

US Gold had a revamped arcade fan favourite ready to be unveiled next month. *OutRun Europa* was to be the follow-up to the original arcade release, at least until Sega developed the *Turbo OutRun* arcade game. *OutRun Europa* was put on ice until the *Turbo OutRun* franchise had been milked.

OutRun Europa let you park your Ferrari and jump on a motorbike or jet-ski in later levels, all played within the confines of a rather ropey spy story. However, it received a warm welcome from reviewers when released, although gamers were never quite sure why…

Computer & Video Games was relatively restrained in the dishing out of its C&VG Hit's with *Sonic The Hedgehog* (Sega, Mega Drive), *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* (Electronic Arts, PC), *Zero Wing* (Toaplan, Mega Drive) and *Beast Busters* (Activision, Amiga) deemed good enough to be awarded one.

Its sister magazine, *Mean Machines*, was equally tightfisted with its Mega Game honours, giving them to just three games: *Ice Hockey* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive), *The Hunt For Red October* (Nintendo, Game Boy) and *Kabuki Quantum Warrior* (HAL, NES).

Multiformat magazine *Zero* was more free in its award giving with *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* (Electronic Arts, PC), *Heart Of China* (Dynamix, PC/Amiga) and *Manchester United Europe* (Krisalis, Amiga) all receiving Zero Hero status, while *Sonic The Hedgehog* (Sega, Mega Drive), *Mickey Mouse II* (Kemco, Game Boy), *Shinobi* (Sega, Game Gear) and *WWF Superstars* (LJN, Game Boy) all bagged themselves a Console Classic award.

ZZAP



Zzap took a jaunt down to Ocean Software's HQ to see how its eagerly awaited game, *Terminator 2*, was progressing. With the movie premiering this month and *Terminator* hype abounding, how would Ocean approach selling the game to the punters? Programmer Bobby Earl had the answer: "Its *Terminator 2*. It sells itself." Fair comment.



ZERO



The prominent feature for *Zero* this month was a summary of the Consumer Electronics Show. Among the offerings was a lot of tat, including the Simulator II Action Chair and the Fish Phone – a fish that was indeed a phone. Now that's taking the piscine…



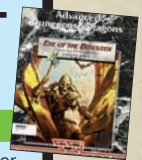
MEAN MACHINES



The Electronic Arts Mega Drive sporting franchise spectacular had begun. *John Madden's Football* was the first offering and now *EA Hockey* was the second. Both were good for the time but would later clog up car-boots and eBay the length and breadth of the country.

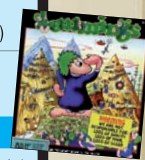


AUGUST 1991



AMIGA

1. Eye Of The Beholder (SSI/US Gold)
2. Elvira (Accolade)
3. Wonderland (Virgin)
4. Gods (Bitmap Brothers/Renegade)
5. Armour-Geddon (Psygnosis)



ATARI ST

1. Lemmings (Psygnosis)
2. Elvira (Accolade)
3. Wonderland (Virgin)
4. Gods (Bitmap Brothers/Renegade)
5. Armour-Geddon (Psygnosis)

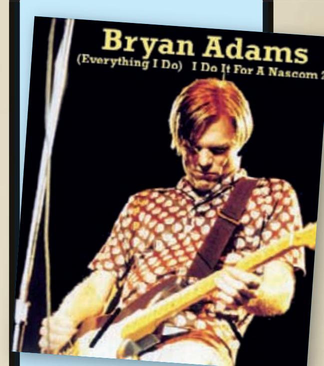


PC

1. Jetfighter (Velocity/US Gold)
2. Lemmings (Psygnosis)
3. Sim Earth (Ocean)
4. King's Quest V (Sierra)
5. Space Quest IV (Sierra)

MUSIC

1. (Everything I Do) I Do It For You (Bryan Adams)
2. I'm Too Sexy (Right Said Fred)
3. More Than Words (Extreme)
4. Set Adrift On Memory Bliss (PM Dawn)
5. Move Any Mountain (The Shamen)



RETRO GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL

GENERAL CHAOS

THE ARCADE ACTION BATTLE GAME OF PARAMILITARY PANDEMONIUM



- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **RELEASED:** 1994
- » **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



HISTORY

War is Hell… a hell of a lot of fun, that is. Well, it is in EA's 1993 title *General Chaos*. The game immerses the player in a frantic small-scale war raging across a wide variety of pseudo 3D single-screen backdrops gloriously rendered in bright, colourful, cartoon graphics reminiscent of SNK's supreme *Metal Slug*.

Prior to battle, the players assemble a five-man squad of gung-ho heroes, mixing and matching at will from a list of machine gunners, flamethrower bearers, grenadiers, and rocket launchers. The player controls their squad via a simple and effective point-and-click interface; a large cursor is guided to a suitable location, to which the currently selected squad member can be commanded to run to or direct their arsenal of firepower.

The battlefields also feature obstacles to navigate or hide behind, engendering a strategic element to the frenetic proceedings. Certain levels feature ponds and rivers that can be crossed via handily placed logs, or forded by wading, But watch out when sending a flamethrower bearer across water because his weapon will be temporarily capable of only firing bubbles.

Engagements are not limited to weaponry, as evidenced by Close Combat – one of the game's simplest and most inspired elements. In the heat of battle a collision between two enemy soldiers sees the aggrieved parties engage in a spot of fisticuffs that employ slightly 'modified' Queensbury rules (kicking is allowed, as is knifing a stricken opponent!).

Like *Micro Machines*, *General Chaos* may be best thought of as a great example of what we now term 'party games'. Single-player mode, while initially engaging, lacks depth and longevity; however, the same cannot be said of the splendid multitap co-op and battle modes, whereby the action is suitably chaotic and evokes a bitter rivalry both on-screen and off. War, what is it good for? Hours of explosive entertainment, that's what.

Want to appear in the magazine? Then be sure to upload classic profiles at www.retrogamer.net



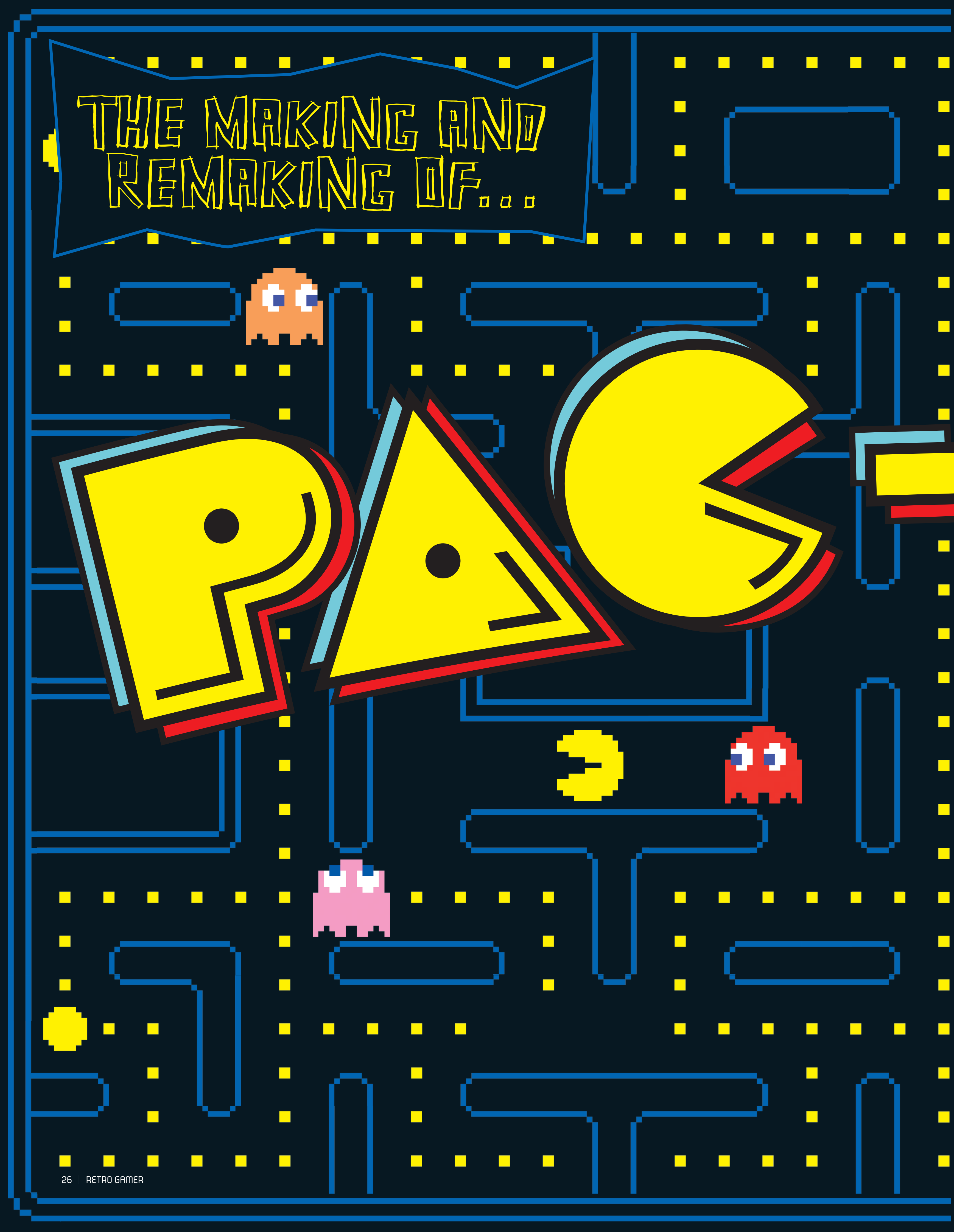


RETROBATE PROFILE

- » **NAME:** DOUGLAS KITE
- » **JOINED:** 11 AUG 2008
- » **LOCATION:** STRAYLIGHT
- » **OCCUPATION:** DEVELOPER
- » **FAV GAMES SYSTEM:** DREAMCAST

THE MAKING AND REMAKING OF...

PAC-



MAN

CRAIG GRANNELL TALKS TO TORU IWATANI ABOUT HOW HE CREATED THE MOST ICONIC CHARACTER IN VIDEOGAMES HISTORY, DEVISED ONE OF THE MOST ENDURING AND COPIED GAME FORMATS, AND HOW HE REVISITED HIS CREATION FOR XBOX 360

With modern-day game characters often being designed and scripted to ape Hollywood movie stars, it's pleasing to note that a yellow circle with an insatiable appetite remains the most enduring videogaming star to date. After all, which gamer hasn't played some variant of *Pac-Man*? According to a May 2008 report by the Davie Brown Celebrity Index (dbireport.com), which scores celebrities to evaluate potential product spokespeople, *Pac-Man* was recognised by 94 per cent of US consumers, outstripping even *Mario*. *Pac-Man*'s appeal is, ironically, akin to Hollywood heavyweights like Tom Hanks and Will Smith.

Part of this appeal is no doubt down to the fun, peaceful nature of Pac-Man and his actions. He explores a simple maze, munching dots, pursued by a quartet of cartoon ghosts. When Pac-Man eats one of the maze's four power pellets, the ghosts turn blue and flee, having suddenly become edible and decidedly non-threatening. However, even when a ghost is consumed, its eyes 'escape', hastily retreating to the central ghost pen, whereupon it's reborn.



» Toru Iwatani with an altogether cuddlier version of Blinky/Akabei, along with similarly soft versions of Pac-Man.

This gentle, good-natured gameplay was no accident, as the game's designer Toru Iwatani explains. "In the late Seventies, videogame arcades, which in Japan we call 'game centres', were just playgrounds for boys, and the only videogames on offer were brutal affairs involving the killing of aliens," he remembers. "My aim was to come up with a game that had an endearing charm, was easy to play, involved lots of light-hearted fun, and that women and couples could enjoy."

IT'S PIZZA TIME

Iwatani started thinking about videogame ideas in which the key word was the verb 'eat'. And, yes, the pizza rumour is largely true – suitably, while at a lunch, a fast-food favourite forever changed the course of gaming history. "With 'eat' established as the key word, a shape caught my eye," recalls Iwatani. "I had ordered a round pizza, and it was missing a piece." In a 'eureka' moment, Iwatani says, "the shape of what is now Pac-Man flashed through my mind."

IN THE KNOW



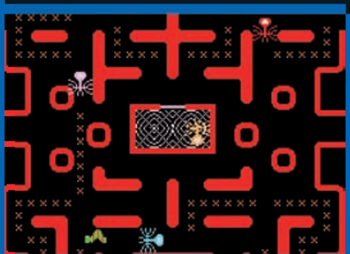
- **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO/MIDWAY
- **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO
- **RELEASED:** 1980
- **FEATURED PLATFORM:** PAC-MAN: ARCADE (WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CONVERTED TO VARIOUS HOME SYSTEMS)
- **GENRE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £400+ FOR A CABINET; 50P+ FOR HOME CONVERSIONS

THE MAKING AND REMAKING OF... PAC-MAN

HACK-MAN

With its efficient, simple gameplay and aesthetics, *Pac-Man* was popular fodder for the hacking brigade. Basic hacks involved minor gameplay tweaks, such as speeding things up, while slightly less basic hacks messed about with the maze, graphics and sound, adding to the original game's pristine polish a veneer of sticky and semi-random digital jam. The hideous *Joyman*, with its ghastly audio and broken maze layout, most notably kicked *Pac-Man* in the head with all the subtlety of a size-ten boot.

The most effective hacks are those that respect the original formula – *Hangly-Man*'s amended mazes – but GL's *Piranha* is an exception. Removing the maze and shifting the setting to a claustrophobic underwater cavern – the eponymous piranha pursued by ravenous octopuses – gives the game an edge in terms of focus and originality that other hacks typically lack.



Even in those early gaming days, videogame characters had a little detail, but Pac-Man was forever destined in his first incarnation to remain a yellow disc with a basic mouth, like an incredibly simplified version of Iwatani's lunch. He notes that some suggested at the time that other components should be added, such as eyes, but then there would be no end to the additions. "As design concepts, both Pac-Man and the ghosts have a simplicity and endearing charm," Iwatani says of his decision to keep the graphic design streamlined, also suggesting that the visuals of the game helped it appeal to female gamers of the day.

The elegant clarity of the character design also influenced the game itself. The food for Pac-Man to eat was initially strewn all over the screen, but Iwatani was keen to ensure gamers would immediately know what to do. "I wanted to simplify gameplay operation, and so the idea occurred to me of constructing a maze in which movement was restricted to the four basic directions – up and down, left and right," he says. With this structure in place, the game's objective became more obvious, and the lead character soon gained his moniker, 'Pakku Man', based on Japanese slang 'paku-paku', which describes the sound of the mouth while eating. (The original game's title subsequently became *Puck Man*. The US publisher, Midway, renamed it *Pac-Man* to stop wily hoodlums amending the 'p' in 'puck' to an 'f'.)

With the game's basic content dealt with, Iwatani realised it wasn't yet much fun, and so enemies were added to the mix, providing tension and excitement, and making it a challenge for players to grab food from the maze. Unusually for the time, Iwatani not only developed rudimentary artificial intelligence for the ghosts, but ensured each one had its own personality of sorts, due to moving and attacking Pac-Man in its own way. "The adversarial TV cartoon *Tom And Jerry* helped shape the relationship between Pac-Man and the ghosts," recalls Iwatani. "Had the programming been such that the four ghosts constantly attacked Pac-Man's present location according to the same algorithm, the ghosts would look like a string of beads. Where's the thrill in that? So I introduced AI-type algorithms that had the ghosts coming at Pac-Man from all directions."

ROLL CALL

And so we were introduced to Blinky, Pinky, Inky and Clyde (Akabei, Pinky, Aosuke and Guzuta in the original Japanese release). According to Iwatani, the ghosts attack in waves, before dispersing and attacking again, which gives the player some regular breathing space and appears more organic than the kind of incessant attacks that had plagued earlier arcade games like *Space Invaders*. (Over time, these waves are harder to identify, and the ghost attacks become swift and relentless, somewhat contradicting Iwatani's desire for a non-stressful game, but providing a necessary long-term challenge for seasoned players.) Although gamers often disagree with exactly how the algorithms work in practice, Iwatani has in the past stated that

> **"I designed the game so players of any age and either sex could play it straight away, without reading a game manual"** TORU IWATANI



» When *Pac-Man* won awards, it didn't mess about: these are for the 'most successful coin-operated game in history' and 'game of the century'.

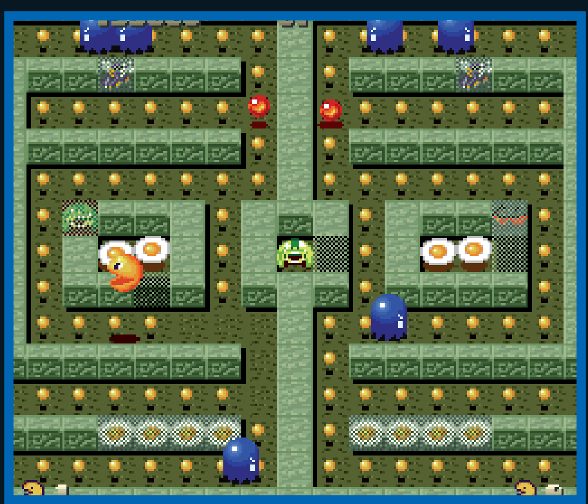
Blinky is designed to chase Pac-Man, but that Pinky's goal is to aim just in front of Pac-Man, hence why the two often seem to 'sandwich' the hero. The movement of Inky and Clyde is more random, the end result being that Pac-Man is pursued in a natural way, rather than in a robotic, pre-defined manner.

The attacks aren't entirely one-sided, however; as noted earlier, the maze contains four power pellets, which temporarily transform the ghosts into a 'scared' blue form, enabling Pac-Man to turn the tables, hunt and eat them. "The inspiration for the power pellet was the spinach in the TV cartoon Popeye," explains Iwatani. "The power pellets didn't exist in the planning stages at all – they emerged during the development stage as a feature for turning the game around, and made the game vastly more interesting."

Although the completed *Pac-Man* ended up shipping well over quarter of a million units, Iwatani notes that the game's impact wasn't immediate: "In Japan, the game met with a lukewarm reception at first, but it then proved to be a long seller over several years." Amusingly, its success in the USA also took people by surprise, with 'experts' of the time judging *Rally-X* to be 1980's game to watch. However, Iwatani's ability to attract all kinds of gamers, rather than just teenagers keen on blowing up aliens, hit home. "Overseas, it was a massive hit – people who normally didn't play videogames became avid fans, and there was much media coverage of the playing of *Pac-Man*," he recalls.

The game has also stood the test of time, being converted to myriad platforms, and it regularly appears on compilations and various online services to this day. "I designed the game so that players of any age and either sex could play it straight away, without reading a game manual," says Iwatani of his creation's enduring popularity. "The game also contains numerous detailed stratagems for reading the players' psychology."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Iwatani claims he'd not revise his game, given the chance to go back and do so. "At the design stage, there was a 'shutter' feature, which opened and closed, acting as an obstacle in the path of the maze," he says. "But I'd change nothing from the final game. Why? Because *Pac-Man* is complete to such an extent that to add or to subtract anything at all would be unacceptable."



» **[Arcade]** Semicon's mid-Nineties *Hyper Pacman* provides an almost *Bomberman*-like take on *Pac-Man*, throwing strange boss fights into the mix.

CONVERSION CAPERS

With myriad Pac-Man conversions available, we look at the most curious examples



ATARI 2600

Embarrassingly drawing attention to itself via an 'Atari National *Pac-Man* Day', this conversion supposedly resulted from marketing pressure. A flickering mess, the game's dreadful maze layout and ropey gameplay led to a shortfall in sales, with five million cartridges left gathering dust.



VIC-20

While most VIC-20 owners had Atarisoft's dire conversion, Japanese Commodore fans were enjoying HAL Laboratories' superior take on *Pac-Man*. Commodore renamed the game *Jelly Monsters* outside of Japan, but fell foul of Atari's legal hammer of doom, and withdrew the game.



MSX

Namco's 1984 MSX release eschewed the horizontally stretched mazes of most home conversions, instead shifting the score display to the side of a smaller maze that retained the arcade parent's aspect ratio. This device remains in use today – eg: in *Pac-Man* plug-and-play TV games.



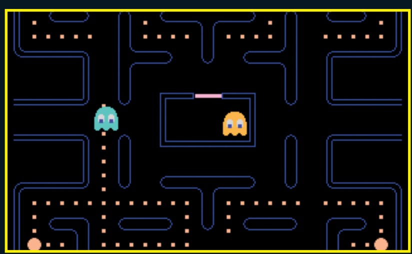
FUJITSU FM-7

Instead of following the MSX conversion's method of dealing with varying aspect ratios between arcade and home screens, 1984's Japanese FM-7 *Pac-Man* release rotates the maze by 90 degrees. This means no stretched maze and no weeny graphics, but the change disorientates.



GAME BOY ADVANCE

A touch of the crazies descended over Nintendo HQ when the NES Classics line reached Europe. With collectable boxes ditched and prices raised, you got a botched port of the bog-standard NES conversion for more than the superior *Pac-Man Collection* cost at the time. Nice.



iPHONE

The *Pac-Man* conversion for Apple's handheld is mostly unremarkable and accurate, but the lack of tactile controls results in curious control methods: 'swiping', an on-screen D-pad, and tilting to move Pac-Man. Swiping works best; directions are confirmed via an on-screen joystick.

THE MAKING AND REMAKING OF... PAC-MAN

PAC-MAN MILESTONES

A brief overview of notable arcade-based



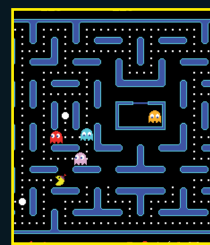
MS PAC-MAN (1981)

Fed up waiting for Namco's *Pac-Man* sequel, US distributor Midway struck a blow for gender equality by releasing GCC's *Pac-Man* hack. Along with speeding up the game and amending the hero, *Ms Pac-Man* includes new mazes, more varied ghost behaviour and moving fruit.



SUPER PAC-MAN (1982)

Namco's *Pac-Man* sequel disappointed many outside of Japan, due to the fact that the gameplay was substantially altered. You still clear mazes, but munch targets behind gates that open when keys are guzzled. A 'super power dot' makes Pac-Man grow Hulk-like, to devour everything in his path.

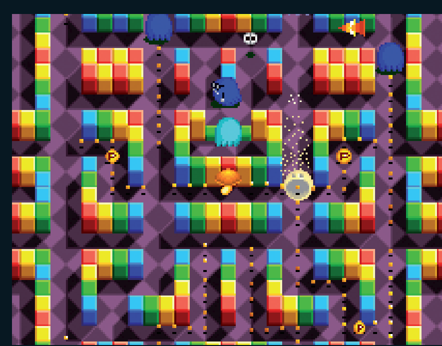


JR. PAC-MAN (1983)

Midway again did the naughty, creating this effort without permission, and Namco terminated Midway's licensing agreement. Namco still doesn't recognise the game as official. With its scrolling levels obliterating the original's tightly honed strategic gameplay, it's easy to see why.



» **[Arcade]** UA rampaging *Pac-Man* on level one devours a ghost before laying eyes on the cherries. Meanwhile, a resurrected Pinky sets out for revenge.



» **[Arcade]** *Pac-Man Arrangement*, released in 1996 as part of *Namco Classics Collection Vol.2*, is a successful *Pac-Man* update, with pretty graphics and interesting new features.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS



LIBBLE RABBLE! (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1983

PAC-LAND
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1984

RIDGE RACER
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1993

RETURN OF THE PAC

Despite having worked on a range of titles over the years, including *Time Crisis* and *Ridge Racer*, it's clear Iwatani's heart always remained with his disc-based creation. During the Eighties, he was involved in both *Pac-Land* and *Pac-Mania*, with the former being his favourite. "It pioneered action videogames in which the scene flows horizontally. According to its creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo's *Super Mario Bros.* was influenced by *Pac-Land*," he says, proudly.

However, it was during 2006 that Iwatani finally got the chance to both return to *Pac-Man*'s roots and design an engaging, modern-day evolution of his original creation. Instead of the arcades, the chosen platform was Xbox Live Arcade, and the game became *Pac-Man Championship Edition* (*PMCE*).

"The time was right for a next-generation *Pac-Man*, because the Xbox Live Arcade environment supports real-time competition with score-ranking via the internet, and improved design through its hardware specification," explains Iwatani about the origins of *PMCE*. "My aim with the game was to achieve legitimate evolution, with simplicity of game design and absence of the superfluous as my guiding principles, because, in my opinion, few players look for complexity in gameplay."

Guided by the same ground rules that defined *Pac-Man* – immediacy, simplicity, immunity to language and cultural differences, and "that sense of wanting to play and have fun, which is what the world's videogame players are looking for" – *Pac-Man Championship Edition* broadly retains the original's core gameplay, tasking the player with navigating a maze to eat dots, fruit and power pellets and avoiding roaming ghosts. However, some major changes were made to the formula, in order to keep the game relevant and ensure it was more than just the original game reskinned.

Rather than the player having to clear a maze to proceed, *Pac-Man Championship Edition* plays like a time-attack game, and the player has a strict time limit in which to score as many points as possible. As with *Pac-Man*, this is done by consuming dots and 'scared' ghosts, but the longer you stay alive, the more each dot is worth (and the faster the game becomes). Also, the maze is now split in half. Clear one half of dots and bonus fruit appears in the other; eat said fruit and new dots are spawned in the previously cleared half. "The horizontal maze came about due to the prevalence of widescreen displays," explains Iwatani, noting that the split-maze device also creates non-stop action, unlike the original *Pac-Man*, which 'interrupts' players upon a level's completion. "And the timeout feature increases the sense of speed and excitement in the game, making it a very thrilling experience. Also, score ranking via the internet provides competition, which has been a great success." Iwatani adds that one of the key aims was to have people worldwide competing, the logical modern-day equivalent of Eighties' high-score table on the original *Pac-Man*.

Pac-Man follow-ups



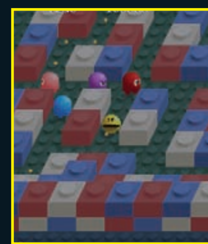
PAC & PAL (1983)

Here, Namco again moved further from the original *Pac-Man*. Ghosts can only be stunned rather than eaten, and now flipping cards opens gates to reveal items. The 'Pal' of the title is the infuriating Miru, who makes off with your bonus items, taking them to the inaccessible ghost pen.



PAC-LAND (1984)

Pac-Man finally left the maze, gained legs, arms and a face, and was tasked with battling through this early side-scrolling arcade game, its levels peppered with *Pac-Man* imagery. Although repetitious, the game is initially fun and it's more successful than Namco's previous two efforts.

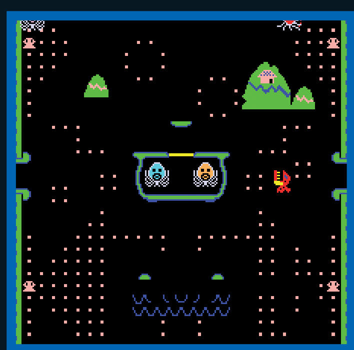


PAC-MANIA (1987)

Pac-Man finally returned to his roots in *Pac-Mania*, although as you can see his surroundings are markedly different. The isometric maze scrolls, and the ghosts tend to roam in packs. Although, in Pac-Man's favour, he can now jump and he occasionally finds bonus items that speed him up.



» [Arcade] Several levels in and the ghosts become faster – you barely have time to eat them after consuming a power



» [Arcade] *Piranha* is a decent *Pac-Man* hack, removing the maze and thereby creating a different and tougher game.



With grateful thanks to Tetsuya Hayashi for invaluable assistance in realising this interview.

> **"Pac-Man's guiding principle is 'fun first'"** TORU IWATANI

Perhaps ironically, *PMCE* was, unlike *Pac-Man*, critically acclaimed right from the start. 1UP.com ranked it alongside *Geometry Wars* in terms of a classic game format being reworked, noting that it was "a lot more than just a tarted-up *Pac-Man*." Joystiq's Jared Rea blogged: "A better name for it would have been *Pac-Man 2*, […] a name that gets the point across that *Pac-Man Championship Edition* is the first true sequel to the game since *Ms Pac-Man*."

Iwatani modestly suggests that some of the acclaim might be due to low expectations for a *Pac-Man* game, and says the response of game players exceeded his expectations, citing the many internet-based critiques that offered "splendidly glowing evaluations". (Happily, and despite claims to the contrary, Iwatani also assures us that *PMCE* is not necessarily to be his swansong, since he continues to be involved in videogame production. So, take that, internet rumour mill!)

PASS IT ON

With 30 years of experience in videogames design, including the most iconic games character of them all, Iwatani is now, perhaps suitably, involved in teaching aspects of videogames design to students at Tokyo Polytechnic University, along with conducting research into games for social purposes. Although *Pac-Man* has always remained popular throughout the years, we wondered what Iwatani made of the games industry's tendency towards over-complication and movie-like games, along with the relatively recent resurgence in retro-orientated titles. "We should carefully gauge the preferences of light users, who normally don't play videogames, and the preferences of videogame aficionados, and then design products to suit each," he suggests, thoughtfully. "A sumptuous party dress may be of limited practical value in daily living, and the same applies to over-elaborate videogames in the videogame market." On retro titles – 'pick up and play' games popularised by the internet, XBLA, Nintendo DS, Wii and iPhone – Iwatani thinks this might be a sign that the actual game, rather than aesthetics, is again becoming the main concern for developers: "Hardware specifications 20 or 30 years ago restricted powers of expression, and so the rules of the game were decisive in attracting users. The current boom in retro games is evidence of a universal fascination with game-playing itself."

We finish the interview by returning to *Pac-Man*. How does it feel to be the designer behind a game that almost everyone knows – one that perhaps only *Tetris* can challenge in terms of widespread appeal? "People view the work in different ways, from different viewpoints. Some see it as being broad and shallow. For others, it is narrow yet deep and praised," considers Iwatani. "What is gratifying about this is that people find such different reasons for loving it." And as a final word, Iwatani reckons that there are still things his 28-year-old creation can teach modern-day games designers, developers and publishers. "*Pac-Man* is the perfect videogame because its design gives top priority to the player and to a spirit of service," he says. "Its guiding principle is 'fun first'. This concept is in my view invincible and what I look for in the videogame creators of today, that they understand the importance of capturing people's hearts."

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



DATAFILE

NAME: TONY CROWTHER
DATE OF BIRTH: 10 MAY 1965
FIRST JOB: TOMATO PICKER
CURRENTLY: COMPUTER SALESMAN
FAVOURITE FILM: THE ABYSS

TONY CROWTHER

HE MADE THE COMMODORES SING IN THE EIGHTIES AND CONTINUES TO WORK HIS MAGIC AT EA TODAY. TONY CROWTHER TELLS PAUL DRURY HOW TO TURN OUT A TOP TITLE IN A FORTNIGHT...



» [C64] *Killer Watt* was based on Eugene Jarvis's hit shooter *Defender*. Looking back now it's rather obvious.

Did you ever wander into Superior Systems, a computer shop on West Street in Sheffield, around 1981? Were you served by a local lad with a touch of the New Romantic about him? Did you, by any chance, pop back the following year and pick up a VIC-20 game called *Amazing*? If you did, let us know, because that's where the long and illustrious coding career of Antony Crowther began.

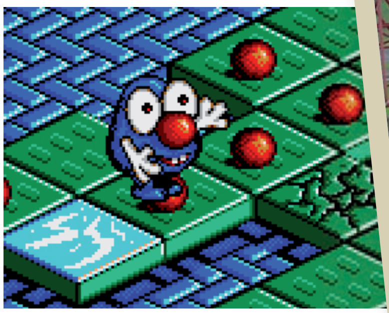
"I begged my parents to get me a VIC-20," smiles Tony. "I learned what computers could do. I rewrote the text adventures I'd played on the BBC Micro at school and that got me used to writing games. The only one that was released was *Amazing*, a 3D maze puzzle that we sold in the shop."

That canny proprietor lent him a C64, with a view to writing games for the machine. His faith was rewarded when Tony delivered six in a matter of months. *Brands*, *Balloon Rescue*, *Damsel In Distress*, *Bat Attack*, *Aztec Tomb Adventure* and *Squash A Frog* were not only an indication of his impressive work rate but also showed a willingness to experiment with different genres. Of course, you can spot the arcade roots of most of those early titles, though *Aztec Tomb* revisited his love of text, accompanied by lo-fi graphical representations of the game's locations produced with nothing more than the 64's ROM graphics.

"The problem was my English was very poor, and probably still is now," acknowledges Tony, sheepishly. "Without the QA process, lots of spelling mistakes made it to release. So I'm guessing it wasn't that successful as they never asked me to do another!"

That first half dozen were certainly lucrative enough for the boss to set up Alligata Software in the offices above the shop, give Tony a big cheque and sensibly let him keep the C64. Tony instantly set about beefing up his development tools.

"Those first six games were written in BASIC, some with a tiny bit of assembly language," he explains. "I had written a one-line assembler that allowed me to enter assembly into the C64's memory. That was written in BASIC too, so it was a little slow. I later rewrote it in assembly using the one-line assembler written in BASIC! This allowed me to write games a lot quicker. So



» [Amiga 500] Boasting two viewpoints, *Bombuzal* is a fantastic puzzler. We'd love to see a remake.





Tony relaxes with his family. He's still working in the industry and is currently stationed at Electronic Arts.

"I WAS ASKED IF I COULD WRITE A GAME LIKE MANIC MINER. TWO WEEKS LATER THEY'RE PLAYING BLAGGER!" TONY IMITATES MATTHEW SMITH'S GAME DESIGN, IF NOT HIS WORK RATE…

I could spend more time thinking about the type of game to write than writing it!"

The later half of 1983 saw him produce the *Defender*-inspired *Killer Watt*, and *Blagger*, a witty 30-screen reply to *Miner Willy*. "I was asked by one of the sales staff at the computer store if I could write a game like *Manic Miner*. Two weeks later he was playing it! I used to enjoy visiting the press to show my new game, so we sort of planned to get a game done every month to work with the magazines. When a project was in full flight I would put in about 16 hours a day and at the end I would rest with a note pad for about two weeks. I enjoyed the challenge and that's why they can be so different."

Proof of Tony's desire to push boundaries can be seen in *Son Of Blagger*, which instead of following in its father's single-screen footsteps, breaks out in all directions. "It was my attempt to play with scrolling up and down as well has left and right," he notes. "I had a tool for editing the map, so it was all planned and drawn with that, the exception being the maze near the end. That was generated by the C64 on start up. If you change the screen colour when the game starts, you can see it draw the maze on the screen before it runs the game…"

Despite his gruelling coding regime, Tony did find time to play games too, rediscovering his joy of text through MUD (Multi-User Dungeon) via Compunet, the C64's proto-web service. It was during these long sessions of typing that Tony coined an enduring nickname.

"Wizards kept killing me, so I thought if I was called 'rat' they might think I was a game animal, and leave me alone. The game wouldn't let me enter rat, so I tried 'ratt' and I've used it ever since."

1984 was indeed the Year of the RATT, seeing Tony release some of his most fondly remembered 8-bit titles. He was made a company director at Gremlin Graphics and produced *Monty Mole*, as well as depositing *Potty Pigeon*. Before departing Alligata, he found time to create the lovely looking *Loco*, which chugged along to a fine rendition of Jean Michel Jarre's *Equinoxe 5*.

"I based *Loco* on an arcade game I'd seen called *Super Locomotive*," recalls Tony. "I thought I'd had the same music but then discovered it was by YMO and we had some French guy…"

The music featured in Tony's games was invariably excellent, thanks to a lasting partnership with school friend Ben Daglish (see boxout 'Sweet Music'). As for publishers, Tony tended to play the field, releasing *Gryphon* through Quicksilva in late '84 and then setting out on his own with Wizard Developments the following year. It wasn't one of his best decisions.

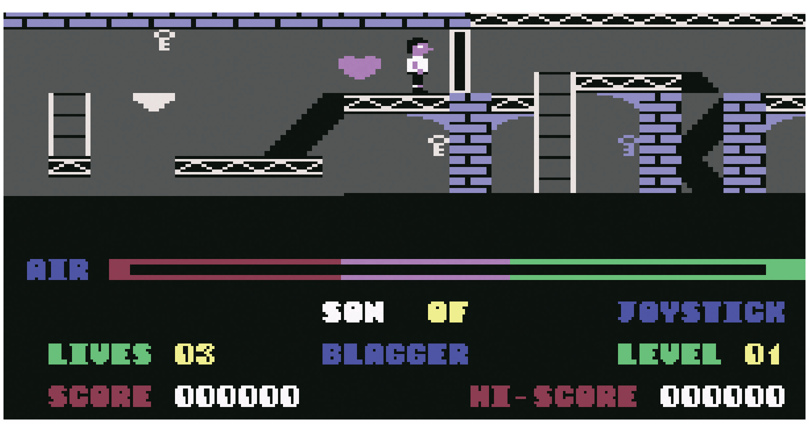
"If I had a time machine I'd like to go back and not leave Gremlin, but I was young and easily convinced to leave," he says, ruefully. "We only put out *William Wobbler* and the problem with it was the randomness of the caves, which meant you had to go all the way back round and try again. That just made it too hard. The game was okay, just some simple puzzles, but because it was random you couldn't describe to someone what to do."

The fancy graphics and head-nodding tune couldn't distract from the frustrating 'fall and die' gameplay, but Tony was soon back on song with *Suicide Express* and *Black Thunder*, the former a super-fast futuristic revamp of *Loco* with some eerie speech and the latter a super-fast futuristic revamp of *Lo*… hang on Tony, what happened here?

"*Suicide Express* was a prototype game," he explains. "It was nearly ready for release but then I left Gremlin and due to the circumstances, I was legally allowed to release the game under another company, so we did. We changed a few things and it became *Black Thunder* for the Quicksilva label. These things do happen, though I don't really like to think about it…"

Tony adds that he received no money for *Suicide Express*, an unfortunate situation that was sadly not unusual for programmers back in the day. He similarly went without recompense for producing *Loco* and the fine blaster *Trap*, one of Tony's lesser known titles, worth seeking out for an mightily impressive hidden demo, revealed if you enter 'DEMO' on the high score table.

Undeterred, Tony continued to push the C64, both technically and creatively. "I was always trying to break the limits on the C64," he says, proudly. "Larger scrolling screen areas or multiplexing sprites. I think I was using 48 sprites and nearly full screen by the time of *Phobia*. All my games have a technical challenge. I'll see arcade games from afar, and then think if I'd done it, I



» [C64] Due to the popularity of *Blagger* a sequel soon followed. *Son Of Blagger* was a far more ambitious project that greatly expanded on the single screen antics that were so prominent in the original.

CROWTHER ON CROWTHER

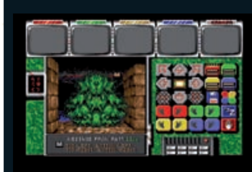
BLAGGER C64
The first of my games that really made people stop and look at what I was doing.



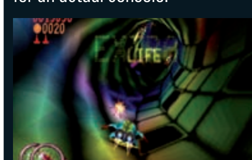
BOMBUZAL C64/AMIGA
I enjoyed getting other people to add levels to the game.



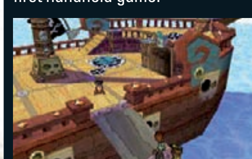
CAPTIVE AMIGA/ST
My first go at writing a role-playing game. Lots of challenges.



N20 PLAYSTATION
This was actually the very first game that I created for an actual console.



ZUBO DS
Always like to support my latest and it's also my first handheld game.

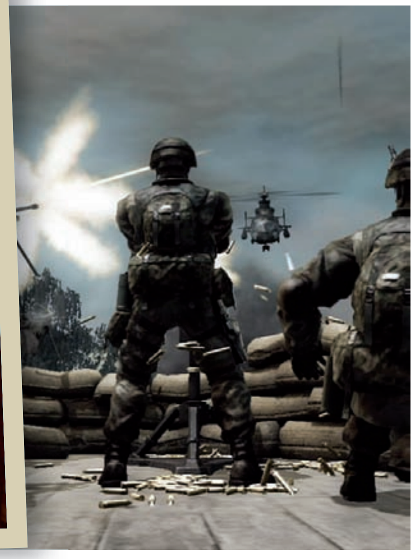


DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



» If you've made as many hit games as Tony you'd be entitled to a well-earned rest as well..



» [Xbox 360] It's a far cry from the likes of *Blagger* but Tony is still proud of his work on games like *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat*.

SWEET MUSIC

Tony's C64 games were frequently accompanied by excellent in-game music, thanks to a very fruitful partnership with Ben Daglish. "I knew Ben from school," explains Tony. "I'm rubbish at music but do enjoy tinkering with it. I wrote the music player, he did the music and in the early days, we produced lots of demo disks to attempt to gain interest from other software houses. And we did! We sold our wares and split the profits 50:50." Working under the banner of WEMUSIC ('We Make Use of Sound In Computers'), the pair produced some memorable tunes together and one look at Ben's lengthy track record at **www.ben-daglish.net** proves he had a work rate on par with Tony's. "Ben was fast," confirms Tony. "I'd have the music the same day I asked! Ben was the musician and I was like the lighting guy [laughs]. I feel I did my bit, though. I would ask and get changes. My favourite piece? I think the *Trap* demo. We had great fun doing it. The special version used three C64s with a special joystick that plugged into all three machines, so we could start them at the same time." A very harmonious relationship, indeed.



"N20 WAS BASED ON TEMPEST. I WANTED TO CREATE A GAME WITH COOL MOTION, WITHOUT MAKING THE PLAYER SICK" TONY EXPLAINS THE ORIGINS OF HIS PLAYSTATION GAME N20

would have done it like this…. and then strange games are born."

Which brings us nicely on to *Kettle*, an innovative oddity featuring England's National Kitchen Appliance building up a destructive head of steam. Tony strongly denies the suggestion that any mushroom tea was involved in its creation, however. "Do you really have to have a game make complete sense?" he laughs. "I think *Kettle* was a lovely game. I enjoyed writing every bit of it, from the funky menus, to the double split-screen two-player mode. I found much pleasure in making the Commodore 64 sweat."

But the faithful beige bread bin was starting to show its age. While Tony continued to make games for the 64 into the late Nineties, including *Fernandez Must Die* and the isometric *Zig Zag* for Mirrorsoft, the 16-bits were beckoning. A prospect he didn't relish.

"It was a big scare for me, but I'd mastered the 64 and needed to move on. I took it easy at first. With *Bombuzal*, I only did the graphics for the 16-bit machines and a friend did the conversion from my 64 code. For *Phobia* I did the Amiga and ST versions too. I was then ready for the 16-bits…"

To make good the point, Tony launched into his most ambitious project yet. "*Captive* was written for my brother Chris," smiles Tony. "He asked me to write a *Dungeon Master*-type game, so I came up with this. The working title was 'Federation War', which got changed to *Captive* by Mindscape, who published it. Chris play-tested it for me, and helped me fine-tune the game. It was a bit scary for me, as I'd been kicking out games in under a month and this took me six! I was sent the art cover and I thought the monster on the cover was cool, so I added it to the game at the last minute."

Captive was critically lauded on its release in 1990 and Tony built on what he learnt by using the engine to produce an adaptation of cult television programme *Knightmare*. "The person behind the show was a big fan of *Captive*," chuckles Tony. "They sent me scripts, talked about how we should do things and we even used the artist from the TV production. Ah, how I enjoyed the old days…"

For *Liberation*, the true sequel to *Captive*, he began working with other coders and graphic artists to produce an epic role-playing adventure, though you are advised to opt for the Amiga CD version, or allegedly suffer the longest installation time of any piece of software ever…

"We made the game on CD and to make the floppy disk version, the installer created all the graphics needed for the game… I think there was about eight disks of data!" nods Tony, confirming the process could take all night. "The CD32 disk version has one of the coolest intros. It played audio CD music, while playing the animation. At the time, that was a big thing, but you couldn't load and play music, so all the animation had to be loaded into memory before it started."

The experience introduced Tony to the practicalities and possibilities opened up by the new storage medium, as well as the recognition that the demands of game development were becoming too great for an individual to attempt alone. It signalled a new phase in his career and during the latter half of the Nineties, Tony spread his talents across numerous platforms. For the PC he produced *Realms Of The Haunting* and the wildly imaginative *Normality*, a game starring a grunge-loving, welly-wearing insurrectionist voiced by Corey Feldman, therefore surely qualifying it for a **Retro Gamer** Making Of some day.

Tony's first foray into console development was a similarly colourful affair, with more than a nod to his old 64 mate Jeff Minter. "*N20* was based on the arcade game *Tempest*," confirms Tony of his psychedelic PlayStation shooter. "I wanted to create a game with cool motion, without making the player sick. I was very pleased with it and the music they found for the game was brilliant…"

It is a treat for eyes and ears, though a little harsh on thumbs, and *N20* was to be the first of many console projects. The new millennium has seen Tony contribute to games as diverse as *Wacky Races* and *Soulbringer* for Infogrames and *Burnout Paradise* for EA, his current employers.

"I think *Wacky Races* was the last game I felt I wrote and was involved with the development of the game from start to finish, including controlling how the design went," explains Tony. "Since then, I've been concentrating on Tools development. The problem with games taking two years to make, you don't get the buzz of releasing projects quickly enough for my hunger. So leading the Tools team allows me to produce tools that are being used within weeks and I get buzzes from pleased artists a lot during development. I just like making people happy! My success on the 64, the Amiga and other machines was down to the tools I wrote. My role may have changed but I still find the same excitement I had when I used to finish a game after two weeks work!"

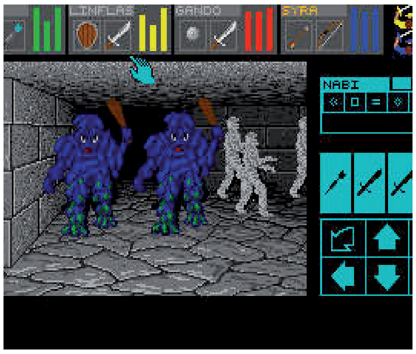
So next time you marvel at an EA release, maybe you just smelled a RATT…



» *Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban*. Just one of the games Tony has worked on at EA.



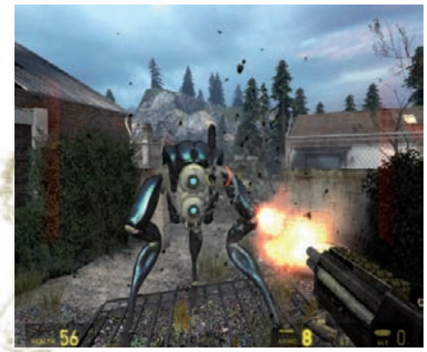
TONY CROWTHER'S DESERT ISLAND DISKS



DUNGEON MASTER

AMIGA

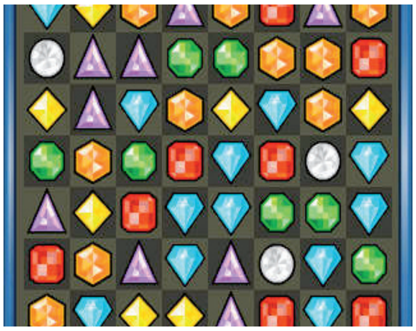
1 It was the first role-playing game that looked impressive and you felt you were really there. The action was quicker and in places I was very scared. The game was played a little like chess, as bad guys couldn't step on your square. This gameplay was lost with real 3D, where you can just run past them.



HALF-LIFE 2

PC

2 This is the next step up from *Dungeon Master* with full 3D. The *Half-Life* experience has been going for a while now and I have enjoyed every incarnation, but the latest is jaw dropping. I've not been able to enjoy playing it on the PS3 – I need a keyboard and mouse to play it. I have real problems playing first-person games on consoles.



BEJEWELED

IPOD TOUCH

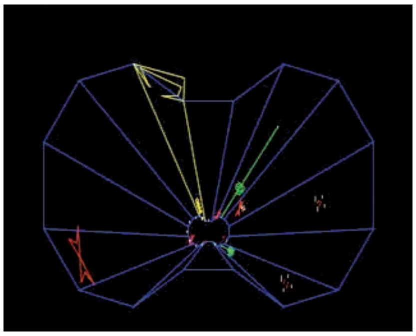
3 I just cannot stop playing. I had to clear the high score table out twice, so my wife has a chance of getting on it. The iPod Touch is probably the best companion for the bathroom. So far, this is the only game I have enjoying playing continuously and keep going back to it. It's a shame the jailbreak version was better then the official one.



ROCK BAND

PS3

4 I'm only picking this one if the kids are allowed to come along as well, I need the rest of the band! Totally loving it. I was struggling with some of the Medium guitar songs but I managed it eventually and it gave me a gold guitar. I now need lots of practise to crack these Hard levels. My fingers just don't move quick enough yet.



TEMPEST

ARCADE

5 I was totally addicted to *Tempest* when it first appeared in arcades. I wasted all my pocket money playing this at the local pub. I could only play the first 18 levels. When the Pulsars started I had no chance. I had to rest my hand on a ripped up cigarette packet to stop getting blisters on the side of my hand from the disk control.



LOCOROCO

PSP

6 This is a breath of fresh air for control systems. I really enjoyed playing it and still get it out to try and find all the hidden things I missed the first time. The levels were simple and the control system made it feel new. I've not seen the sequel yet. Maybe it's better. We shall see…



BURNOUT LEGENDS

PSP

7 I played this till my thumb hurt. It passed the time away when I was flying to Vancouver. This was the first time I noticed how short the battery life was on the PSP. I played the game to the end before I realised there was a crash mode accessed by pressing the triangle button. Doh!



NEW SUPER MARIO BROS

DS

8 This is the only DS game that I've ever managed to complete and I enjoyed every minute of it. It was a shame it had to end. Actually, this was a five-way tie between *Zelda: The Wind Waker* and *Super Monkey Ball* on the Game Cube and *Super Mario World* and *Zelda: Twilight Princess* on the Wii.

> TONY CROWTHER

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE



Fgasking: There was a rumour that as well as the Amiga version of *Captain Planet*, you were involved in an unreleased C64 conversion. Did this ever happen, and if so, has anything of it survived?
No, there was no C64 version done by me. By this time I was hooked on the Amiga and had no plans to go back to the C64.

CraigGrannel: What was the thinking behind your radically different version of *Monty Mole* to Pete Harrap's Z80 original? Were you disappointed that the next two *Monty Mole* games were basically just Speccy conversions with extra graphics and a Rob Hubbard soundtrack, rather than taking advantage of the host machine a little bit more than it did?
No, I don't mind at all the way things went. Gremlin still found them to be successful releases, so can't mock it. The reason for the difference in games is because two people were asked to write a game and we never saw each other until the games were finished. I suspect writing a game like I did on the C64 was found to be too difficult, as it was a real technical challenge to write the first one. So the next programmer to pick up the reins would have opted for the simpler format used by the Spectrum.

Mort: Was *Trap* based on *Zaxxon* crossed with *River Raid*? I really liked the demo mode. Could you spill the beans on how many of your games have hidden demos or Easter Eggs in them?
The game was just another game type I hadn't done yet, so had to have a go! The demo was something I did in my spare time. There was some memory left after the game was finished, so I had a go at filling it up with a demo. I used to enjoy putting test cards in games, but now it's not in my control.

Northway: What ace geezers or geezettes have you met during your time in the industry?
I met Matthew Smith a few times, mostly at conventions, along with Jeff Minter. [I've not met] that many, but I have had a long drink with Fish from Marillion.

MikeB: Have you ever been the victim of pigeon poo, Potty or otherwise?
I think I've been attacked twice now! [laughs] Thinking of the games can be harder than writing them. In the case of *Potty Pigeon*, I wanted to write a *Defender*-type game but one with less controls and freedom of flying. So the next problem is, what do we populate the world with… Sh*tting on cars! Cool!

Revgiblet: Can you remember an interview you did for *Zero* issue 23 with one of the Bitmap Brothers? There was a great photo of him with his arms folded and shades on and you standing beside him was a baseball bat, looking like you were going to club him…
[laughs] Oh goodness. Not at all. I was actually really good friends with the Bitmap Brothers. We often got very, very drunk together, which made the business meetings we attended far more bearable than they actually were. I've tried to find them several times on Facebook now, but have had no luck so far.

Kaiserpc: How long into the development cycle did you decide to make *Captive* only work for 1mb STs, alienating 80 per cent of ST owners?
It was written on the Amiga. The ST version was a port, so if it didn't fit, it was because it wouldn't fit [laughs]. The Amiga was always the best. ST versions were always just ports. It was crap compared to the Amiga [more laughing].

Merman: Did you approach the licensed videogames (*Gobots, Centurions, Captain Planet*) in a different way to your own original games, or did you already have a game style in development that was then adapted to suit the licence?
We didn't have the problems with licences and working with the owners of the licence that we do today. I can't remember anyone saying, "You can't do that".

Gnome: Any chance of a *Normality* sequel?
Sorry, that's out of my hands.

The Master: Who plays your favourite incarnation of Dr Who?
Now it's David Tennant. Previously it was Worzel Gummidge, Jon Pertwee.

For your chance to quiz future castaways please visit the **Retro Gamer** forums at www.retrogamer.net/forum

It's a jungle out there. Swing through it



iPad

Printed full colour large format book

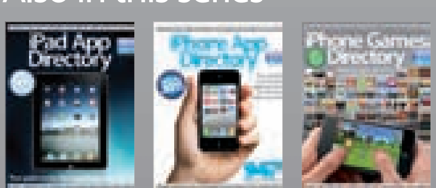
Kindle

Directory™

★★★★★

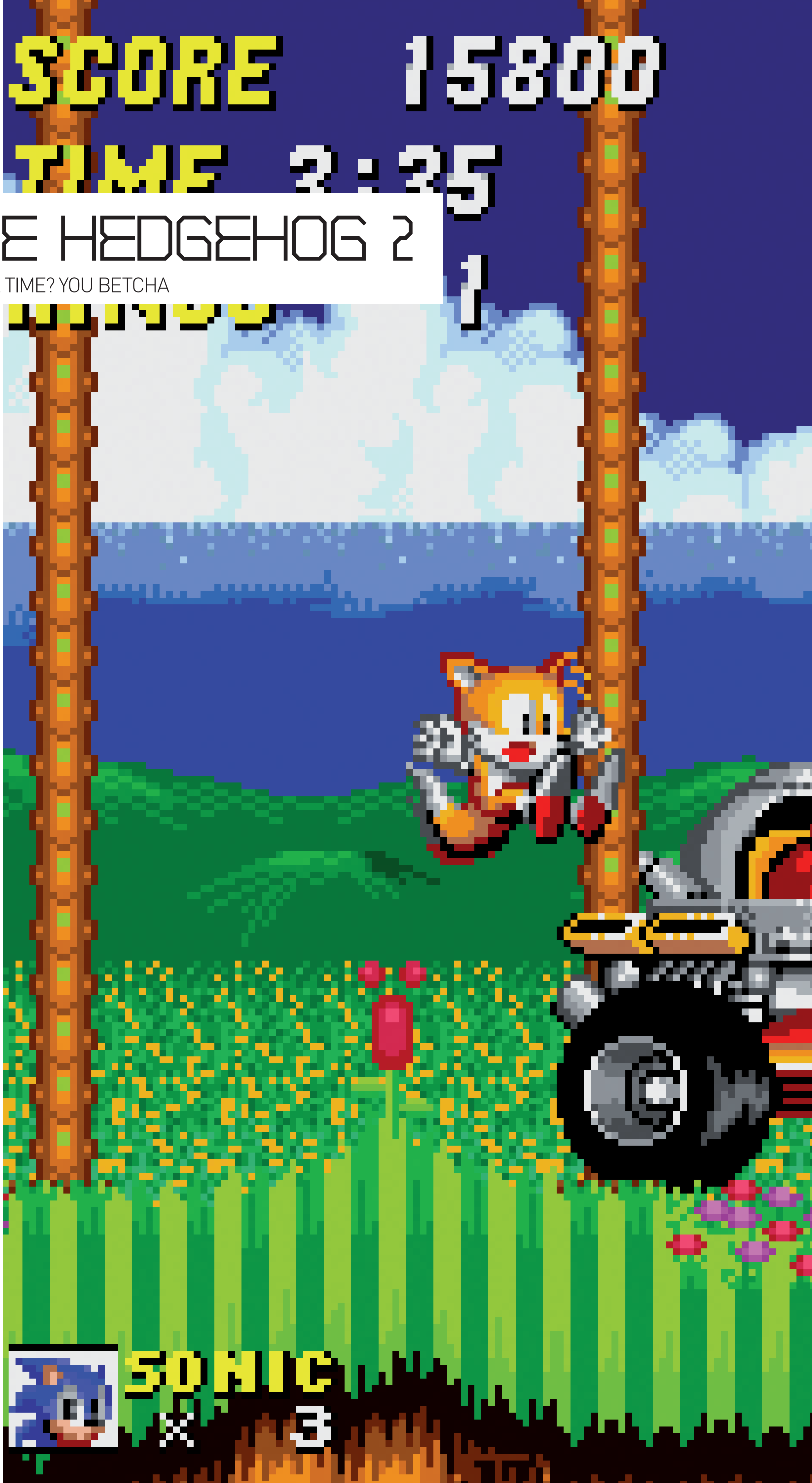
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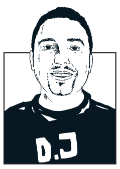
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

THE BEST SONIC GAME OF ALL TIME? YOU BETCHA



- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+

HISTORY



Lightning in a bottle. Every game developer wants it, and yet it's so hard for them to successfully contain it when they do have it within their grasp.

If Sonic's original outing was the proverbial bottled lightning then its sequel, released in 1992, was an all out thunderstorm that held a white gloved, two-fingered salute against the competition and proved that Sega's new mascot was definitely here to stay.

Realising that if it ain't broke there certainly isn't a real need to fix it, *Sonic The Hedgehog 2* (developed by both Sonic Team and Sega Technical Institute) is refreshingly free of the shackles that have plagued later games in the series and proves that the blue Erinaceus's real home will always be the 2D plains of old and not the 3D playgrounds that he's now constantly squeezed into.

Boasting 20 levels, a new spin boost for Sonic and an insane looking pseudo 3D bonus round that saw Sonic racing into the screen in search of rings, the greatest addition to the core gameplay was the addition of Miles 'Tails' Prower. A cute twin-tailed fox with the handy ability to fly after the speedy Sonic, Tails's arrival heralded the inclusion of a new two-player versus mode that enabled you and a mate to race through a stage as quickly as possible. Granted there were only four levels to choose from and the squashed sprites were a little off-putting but I've lost count of the number of hours I spent racing through Casino Night Zone and it still never gets tiring (although I'm nowhere near as good as I once used to be).

Boasting better level design, crisper visuals and some classy tunes, Sega's sequel is one of those rare examples of a follow-up that actually improves on its predecessor in every possible way. So dig it out of your Mega Drive collection, blow that fine level of dust off the casing and fall in love with this classic all over again.





FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Electronic Pencil Company

It may have had a meagre output but the games of EPC are still worth celebrating. Richard Hewison chats to key members of the team and asks if they still have any Zoids toys

Benni Notaraianni joined Thorn EMI as a games programmer in early 1983 after responding to an advert in a computer magazine. John Gibbons was already writing games for Thorn having been similarly enticed by a magazine advert looking for graduates who wanted to 'take game playing seriously'. Other coders at Thorn included Rupert Bowater, John Wilson, Paul Norris, Joss Ellis, Kevin Buckner and Tony Bickley, among many others.

John Gibbons has particularly fond memories of his early programming career at Thorn, and freely admits that it wasn't an unusual sight to see programmers asleep at their desks by the afternoon. However, all-night programming sessions were also common to redress the balance.

"We also got early access to some of the new computers," says John. "I remember playing with one of the first ever Commodore 64s to come into the UK and we had to try working out how to program it by trial and error. The fact that we were working at the leading-edge, often with scant or no documentation at all made it a great fun environment for a particular sort of geek. I loved it!"

"We all had a great time at Thorn," agrees Benni Notaraianni. It wasn't just the nature of the work that made Thorn enjoyable; the location in central London also had its perks for the young programmers. "We used to go to all of the techie shops along Oxford Street, and we eventually became friendly with one shop owner who was a bit of an entrepreneur. He tried to convince me, John Wilson and Kevin Buckner to leave Thorn EMI and work for him instead, writing games."

"He promised to buy us development equipment – flashy BBC computers with Z80 2nd processor boards, and let us use the basement in his shop," recalls John Wilson.

INSTANT EXPERT

Most of the people who worked for EPC had previously been at Thorn EMI and/or were university graduates.

The Fourth Protocol was one of the first computer games to use icons and a GUI interface on the Commodore 64.

The Fourth Protocol was primarily designed by two research scientists who worked at the National History Museum in London.

Zoids on the Commodore 64 was the only published game that EPC both designed and coded.

Rob Hubbard's music for *Zoids* on the Commodore 64 is one of his favourite compositions and is still considered a classic SID tune today.

EPC converted Sensible Software's Commodore 64 football game for the ST and Amiga using a custom-written 6502 emulator. John Gibbons and H Wing Lai used this technique again when converting Commodore 64 games to 16-bit for Millennium Software a year or so later.

EPC worked on a number of abandoned games that never saw the light of day, including *Cosmic Wilderness Warrior* and *Broadsword*.

EPC contributed some of the animated location graphics for the Magnetic Scrolls adventure *Wonderland*.

But why consider leaving Thorn EMI at all? "I was very keen to start my own development company, which was one of the reasons why I was so eager to leave," explains Benni. "Whilst Thorn was great fun, I had more adventurous plans, and I was also excited by the new computers coming out at the time."

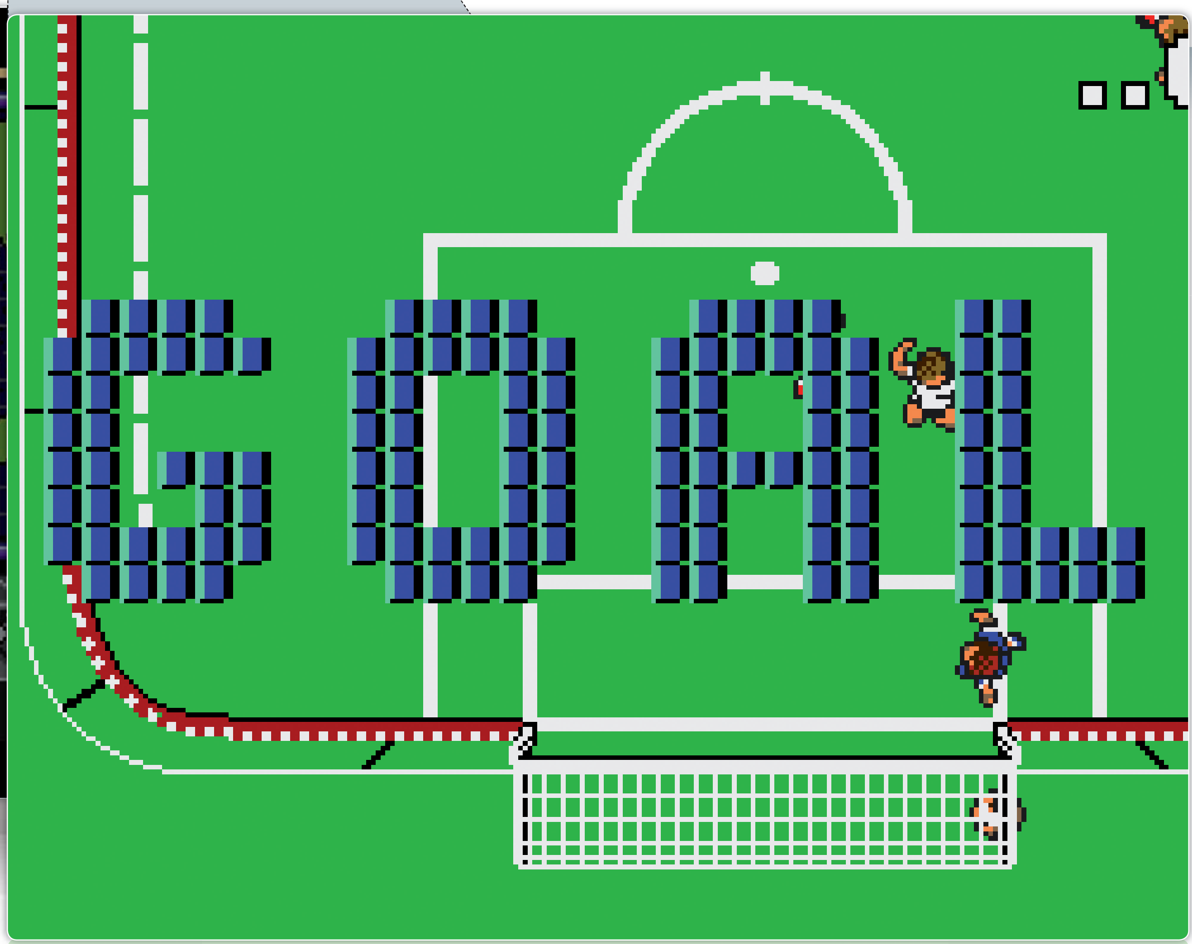
Benni and John Wilson promptly resigned from Thorn but were quickly left with a predicament when the job offer came to nothing, as John explains. "We turned up only to find that the shop owner had gone to India to produce a Bollywood film instead. Moral of the story: make sure you sign a contract first!"

By this time, John Gibbons had also quit from Thorn, because "the writing was on the wall after a couple of waves of redundancies both before and just after I left". As a result, both Johns and Benni missed out on any redundancy payments and they were, according to Benni, "left in a bit of a pickle".

Thankfully, Benni and John Gibbons had some computer journalism experience as they wrote programming articles 'on the side'. To their rescue came an offer from Pan Books – via their 'Personal Computer News' imprint – to write a collection of programming books called *Cracking The Code*. Benni wrote the BBC version of the book, while John Wilson tackled the Spectrum and John Gibbons covered the Commodore 64.



MICROPROSE SOCCER

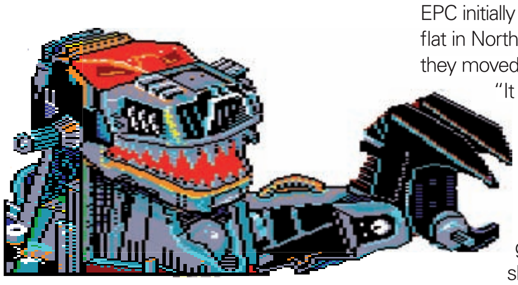


The Electronic Pencil Company

With Thorn EMI a rapidly fading memory and the books published, the time was right for Benni to follow his instincts and set up a software development company with John Wilson.

"John came up with 'The Electronic Pencil Company' name," recalls Benni, although John himself admits to coming by it via a rather unorthodox route.

"I belonged to the local computer club at Hull University, and a fellow member was selling their ZX80 computer games using the name 'The Electronic Pencil Company'. I thought that was a cool name, and a few years later Benni and I were making a list of suitable names for our newly formed company and I threw EPC into the pot. The name wasn't listed at Company House, so we used it!"



> **"Whilst Thorn was fun, I had more adventurous plans. I was excited by new computers coming"** BENNI NOTARAIANNI

At around the same time, Benni met Anna Williams, a student who was completing a degree in Modern Art, Design and Film at Newcastle Polytechnic. "I helped Ben and the guys during the holidays and weekends," she explains. "At first, I mostly made the tea and hung out while they spoke machine code. I kept hoping I might pick it up – like French or Italian – but just when I began recognising phrases like 'dropping the carry flag' they would all go and learn a new language like C!"

Anna moved to London after graduating, and became part of the new company, designing the EPC logo and learning the ropes to become a computer graphics designer. EPC initially operated out of Benni and Anna's flat in North London, but after a few years they moved into proper office space.

"It was an exciting place to live and work," remembers Benni, with some affection. "We were in the Cypriot quarter of London and there were countless fires along the road as the Cypriot greengrocers set each others shops alight!"

First Product... Fourth Protocol

John Wilson quickly made contact with Marjacq Micro Ltd, an offshoot agency run by Jacqui Lyons that represented computer game developers. "At the time, Hutchinson were keen to develop computer games based on published intellectual properties and *The Fourth Protocol* by Frederick Forsyth was top of their list," remembers Jacqui, who still runs Marjacq in its many forms today.

Back in 1984, *The Fourth Protocol* novel had only recently been published. The story concerned a Russian plan (codenamed Aurora) to trigger a small nuclear explosion in the UK. The intention was to disrupt the imminent British General Election and blame the explosion on the US, ensuring an extreme left-wing government was voted in.

Jacqui already had a game design team on her books. John Lambshead and Gordon Paterson were research scientists working on deep-sea ecology by day, but in their spare time they designed and play-tested tabletop war games, and had made the move into computer games with ease. They were ▶

BY THE NUMBERS

2 Number of games EPC released on the ZX Spectrum.

4 The total number of games that EPC released.

5 The number of stars received when *The Fourth Protocol* was reviewed in *Sinclair User*.

£7.95 Price of *Zoids* when it was released on the ZX Spectrum.

18 The number of years that have passed since the closure of EPC.

95 Overall percentage score that *The Fourth Protocol* received in *Zzap!64*.

96 Overall percentage score that *Zoids* received in *Crash*.

1983 The year Benni Notaraianni joined Thorn EMI.

1985 The year that *The Fourth Protocol* got released on the ZX Spectrum.

1989 The year that Rainbird cancelled *Broadsword*.

2009 The year that John Lambshead's first novel was published.

6502 The power of the custom-written emulator used to code Sensible Software's *Microprose Soccer*.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



[Amiga] No game of world domination would be complete without a white pussy to stroke…

OUT-FOXED

Martech published a number of celebrity-licensed games in the Eighties including *Brian Jacks' Superstar Challenge, Geoff Capes Strongman, Eddie Kidd Jump Challenge* and specifically *Samantha Fox Strip Poker*, as Benni Notaraianni recalls.

"I got a phone call from Dave Martin at Martech. He had heard that I had a digitiser and wanted me to help out on a videogame he was doing for the Commodore 64 and Spectrum. He was going to send round Samantha Fox and get me to digitise her stripping. Unfortunately Anna didn't approve… so I had to decline!"



given *The Fourth Protocol* (*TFP*) as their next project.

At the same time as the deal with Hutchinson was being negotiated, something major was happening in the computer world which Jacqui, EPC and the game designers were keen to take advantage of, as Gordon Paterson explains. "We had all seen or come into contact with Apple Macs and this was the way we wanted the game to go. EPC came up with a number of options, which we discussed and modified until we arrived at the screen and control system that was used in the game."

Having signed on the dotted line, EPC was faced with its first deadline. Hutchinson needed a demo for the 1984 Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany. This meant producing something from nothing, as John Wilson recalls. "Benni and I implemented a prototype system on a 48k Spectrum that had various effects – overlaying windows, a desktop with icons, zooming type effects, pop-up menus and a few digitised images."

"I had fun producing the TFP demo… but my heart wasn't in it any more" JOHN WILSON



An ad in *Zzap!64* highlighting EPC's available games. The perfect stocking filler.

Benni also remembers the demo. "We used a digitiser for the BBC micro and borrowed Jacqui Lyon's video camera, then grabbed a picture of John [Wilson]. The quality was very poor compared to today's standards, but it gave John the look of a spy, which is what we needed."

There was no game logic in the demo, and while it served its purpose, the majority of the code was scrapped when development began in earnest. However, just as work on EPC's inaugural game was gathering pace, John Wilson decided to leave.

"I had fun producing the demo, but after a few months of little money and a family on the way, I decided it was time to move on. My heart wasn't in it any more," he explains.

With the workload stacking up, Benni phoned ex-colleague Rupert Bowater (who had recently been made redundant by Thorn EMI), and asked if he wanted to come and work for EPC. Rupert joined soon after and began working on turning the written game design into a three-part graphical, icon-driven adventure. They concentrated on the Commodore 64 version to begin with, but they were always aware that they had to produce a number of other versions.

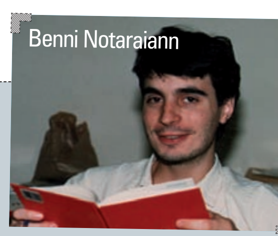
Another ex-Thorn EMI programmer who became involved with EPC was Paul Norris, who was by now a university student. Despite this, he found time to throw some code and design concepts into the hat for *TFP*.

"Paul was a constant source of inspiration. He contributed many ideas to everything we did," recalls Benni, who also drafted in a number of other programmers and graphic artists, including John Gibbons (C64 part 3), Andrew Glaister (Spectrum parts 1-2), David Jones and Ray Owen (Spectrum part 3), Tony Bickley (Apple II), and Brian Mallet (IBM PC).

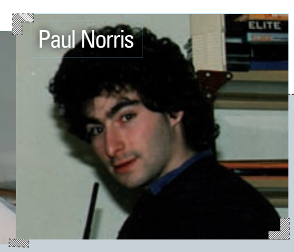
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



H Wing Lai



Benni Notaraiann



Paul Norris

While EPC disappeared 18 years ago, Binary Vision is still a going concern. It is now a web, e-Learning and multimedia company, having left traditional computer games behind a long time ago.

Paul Norris is still a director at Binary Vision, along with Rupert Bowater. Benni Notaraianni currently works on website development for Binary Vision, and would love to code a game for the Apple iPhone someday, while John Gibbons has recently worked for the BBC, creating its embedded flash-based weather map on the BBC website, as well as creating flash content for other websites including a Eurofighter simulator for the RAF, via Binary Vision.

Tony Bickley is currently the chief operating officer of DR Studios, who produced *Risk, Risk II, Hospital Tycoon* and many other simulation or strategy games for the PC market. John Wilson went on to work as a PlayStation Console Programmer for Sales Curve Interactive (SCi) and more recently set up Affinity Studios to develop games for mobile devices, including the recent Carton Network tie-in *Johnny Bravo*.

John Lambshead continued working at the Natural History Museum until he retired in 2008. He became a Senior Research Scientist in Marine Biodiversity, and also has a 'Chair' at Southampton University. He was also a Regent's Lecturer at the University of California and a Programme Manager at the Royal Society. He now writes fantasy fiction, and his first mass market novel, *Lucy's Blade*, was published by Baen in the US in January 2009. His friend and colleague Gordon Paterson continues to work at the Natural History Museum, and is the Associate Keeper of Zoology.

H Wing Lai worked with John Gibbons on converting *Cloud Kingdoms* and *Kid Gloves* to 16-bit for Millennium in the early Nineties, before leaving videogames software altogether. His current whereabouts are unconfirmed.



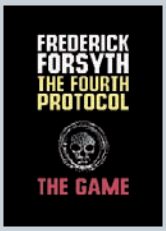
THREE OF THE BEST

The Fourth Protocol (Amstrad CPC)

The Fourth Protocol was a fascinating icon-driven 'Cold War' adventure that gave the player access to all of Britain's spying resources but gave very little information on how to stop the Russians' plans. Time could be wasted on engaging surveillance on the wrong people, and time was precious if the nuclear bomb was to be found and disarmed.

The game managed to simulate a Mac-style GUI on the Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC without the use of a mouse, and it was also split into three distinct 'loads'. The only weak part of the whole package was the concluding third part on the Spectrum, but overall this was an impressive package and a challenging adventure. Proof that books can be turned into genuinely involving games.









Zoids (Commodore 64)

Zoids on the Commodore 64 was a slick, exciting real-time strategy game that featured more icon action and a thumpingly terrific Rob Hubbard soundtrack. It took its subject matter seriously despite being based on toys, throwing the player into the Red vs Blue Zoids scenario with full gusto.

The overall objective was to find the remains of Zoidzilla, reconstruct him and then engage the terrible Redhorn Zoid in a final battle. Twelve segments of Zoidzilla had to be located in total, with eight of them having already been recovered and hidden beneath eight city domes by the Red faction.

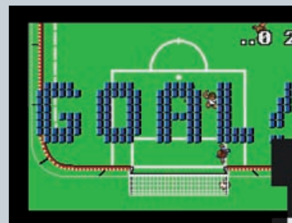
The initial feeling of being overwhelmed by the icon interface slowly disappears as you start to move through the terrain and make progress, and did we mention the great Rob Hubbard music?

Microprose Soccer (ST & Amiga)

EPC's conversion of Sensible Software's 8-bit footie game brought both outdoor and indoor football to the masses on the ST and Amiga and proved to be Sensible Software's stepping stone to the excellent *Sensible Soccer*.

The game featured some nice touches like video rewind, complete with visual noise and loss of colour during the rewind on goal replays, and an indoor option that hasn't been seen in a football game since. You could even choose to play a whole match in black and white if you wanted to.

The gameplay was far from perfect, but with so few football games on the ST or Amiga at the time (Dino Dini's *Kick Off* series was just around the corner) beggars couldn't be choosers.





The Commodore 64 version was coded using a 32k BBC Micro with a Torch Z80 second processor. An Amstrad CPC was introduced later when Benni had to write versions for the CPC and PCW machines.

The Commodore 64 and 48k Spectrum versions were published in the summer of 1985. The other versions followed soon after. The game was also re-released by Ariolasoft in 1987 to coincide with the launch of the film, which starred Michael Caine, Pierce Brosnan and Joanna Cassidy.

The Fourth Protocol was shipped in a large format glossy box with instructions on how to use the icon system, an MI5 Investigators Handbook that explained the things the player was expected to do, details about the British intelligence service, and three 'use once' decoding pads. It certainly felt like the player was getting their money's worth from *TFP*, and the UK computer press were almost universal in their praise of the game and its Mac-like interface. The videogame also made the cover of *Sinclair User* magazine in the UK, which was considered excellent publicity at the time.



ONE VISION

The videogame industry can be a fickle and risky business, so it's hardly surprising that so many classic developers and publishers are no longer around today. Sure, examples like Codemasters and Rare have proven to be exceptions to the rule, but they're few and far between and great companies like Gremlin Graphics, Ocean and US Gold are lost to us forever. Binary Vision the videogames developer may no longer exist, but the company is still around – and doing very well thank you very much – it just realised that it needed a new change of direction…

Still overseen by both Paul Norris and Rupert Bowater, the company excels in Digital Media and e-Learning and has won numerous awards, ranging from BMA Certificates of Merit to being the winner of the 2006 Interactive Media Awards. Working for everyone from the Royal Air Force to the National Health Service, the company has come a long way since its humble beginnings and now boasts over two decades of experience. Just don't expect them to be making a sequel to *Stifflip & Co* any time soon…



But how did EPC feel about its first published game? Did it turn out how the company expected? "You do wholly lose perspective when you've been immersed in something for ages, and I tended to look to reviews for validation," says Rupert Bowater. "It was definitely a good project to work on, though."

Benni also has good memories. "I was very happy with the end product. Without it I doubt EPC would have lasted as long as it did. *TFP* was quite a high profile game and it was very important that we did a good job. I know Jacqui worked hard to get the contract, and John and Gordon worked very hard to create the design. So it was important, at least for me, not to let them down".

Zoids

EPC's next project was also licensed, but that's where the similarity with *TFP* ends.

Zoids were robot-like toys that Japanese manufacturer Tomy launched in the early Eighties. There were dozens of different types, with the robot designs based mostly on dinosaurs and insects. The toys had to be snapped together before they could be played with, and this unique additional feature made the range extremely popular.

Martech negotiated for the licence to produce a *Zoids* computer game, and by a happy coincidence, John Wilson and John Gibbons were both working freelance for Martech at the time, which gave EPC a foot in the door. This time around they had to come up with their own game design, a prospect that particular interested Benni, as he explains.

"*TFP* was exciting, but *Zoids* was all ours. We were given a blank sheet of paper and told to deliver a game in six months time. I think I'm more proud of *Zoids* than *The Fourth Protocol*. It really was a fun project to work on."

The *Zoids* game design was a melting pot of ideas, mostly from Benni, Rupert and Paul Norris, with each person coming up with different elements, as Rupert explains. "I did the geeky and over-complex part of the design where you build a signal pattern to match a reference, whilst Paul did the rail gun, Benni handled the scrolling map, and so on."

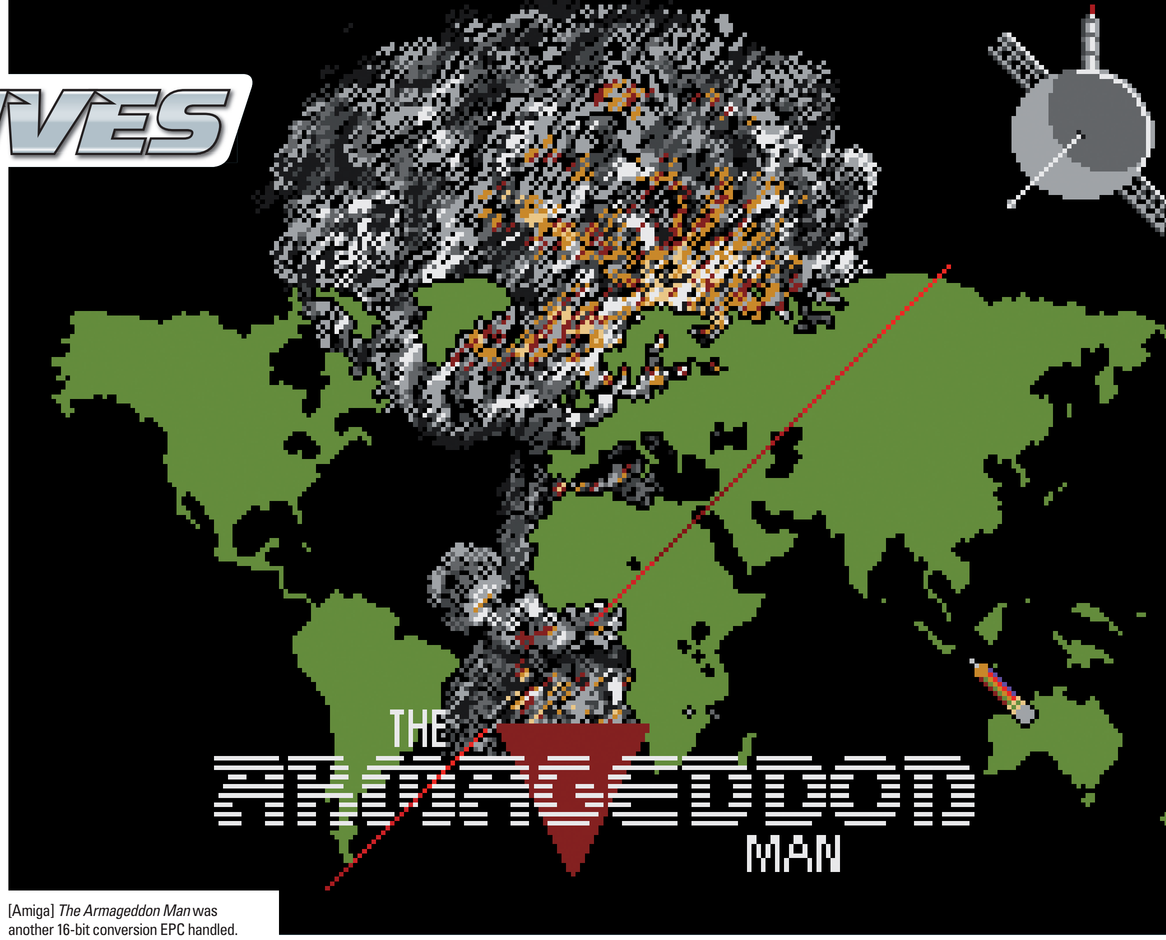
Martech's own programmer, Chris Fayers was assigned the Spectrum version, with EPC leading on the Commodore 64. However, parts of the game were still being designed during development, and Chris eventually caught up. Rather than stop, the decision was made to continue development on the Spectrum regardless. This inevitably created differences between the Z80 conversions (48k Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, MSX) and the Commodore 64 by the time they were all finished.

Binary Vision

Although still at University, Paul Norris spent quite a few of his weekends and term holidays helping Benni and Rupert to code *Zoids*. However, as *Zoids* was being finished, ▶



Jon Gibbons' latest work included creating flash content for websites via Binary Vision.



[Amiga] *The Armageddon Man* was another 16-bit conversion EPC handled.

Rupert Bowater and Paul decided to create their own development company called Binary Vision. The split was amicable; so much so that their new company operated out of EPC's offices and the two companies collaborated on future projects.

With Binary Vision starting to take up more of Rupert and Paul's time, Benni turned to H Wing Lai, a good friend and a fellow Physics graduate from Imperial College, London. Wing joined EPC as a programmer and proved to be a vital member of the team with the inevitable move to 16-bit development. Other programmers and graphic artists would come and go over the next few years, but Wing remained until the end.

The final piece of the *Zoids* jigsaw was the Commodore music supplied by legendary games musician Rob Hubbard. His thumping industrial tune for *Zoids* was very popular. The music remains a favourite to this day with Commodore 64 aficionados and with Rob Hubbard, who cites *Zoids* as one of his best ever compositions.

Zoids: The Battle Begins (to give its full title) was released in the summer of 1986, and was praised by almost all of the computer magazines. Its blend of icons and strategy went down very well, although when the game was given a re-release a year or so later, the Spectrum version was singled out for criticism from one particular journalist who simply hated it. One man's good game is obviously another's pet hate!

> **"Armageddon Man was a good project. I basically left it up to Wing and Anna to do"** BENNI NOTARAIANNI



Armageddon incoming

With *Zoids* a success, EPC's next title was again for Martech, this time writing the 16-bit versions of *The Armageddon Man* – a tactical game that concentrated on attempts to keep the peace between trigger-happy nuclear-empowered nations. It was another icon-driven affair and was a conversion of an 8-bit game originally conceived for Martech by EPC co-founder John Wilson.

The conversions were coded using the Mirage development system, which was a Unix-style operating system for the Atari ST that came supplied on a cartridge. It was command line driven and was considered by EPC to be a better development environment than the standard GEM interface.

"*Armageddon Man* was a good project. I basically left it up to Wing and Anna to do," says Benni, who was credited in the final game with the role of "executive producer and unwanted interference"!

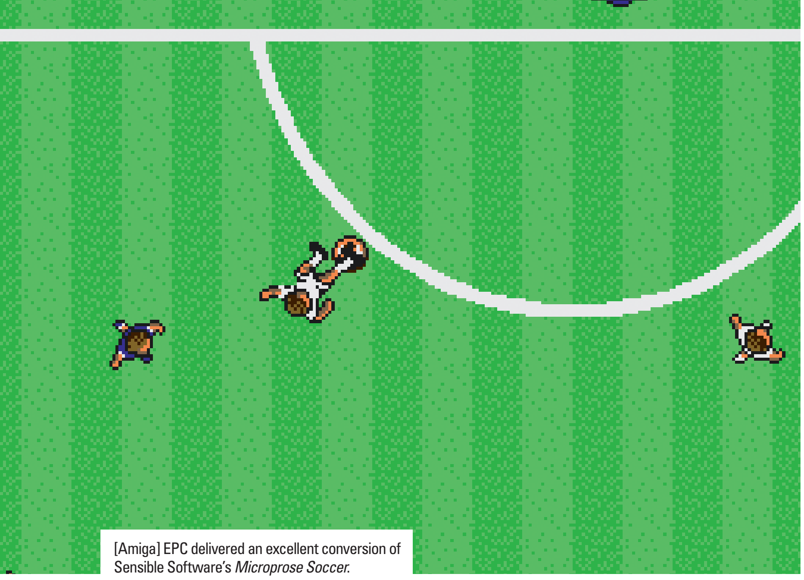
Microprose Soccer

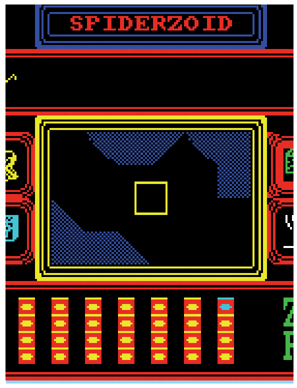
Another 16-bit project was next, converting Sensible Software's Commodore 64 game *Microprose Soccer* to the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga.

Freelancer John Gibbons remembers the conversion with some pride. "I co-wrote that conversion with Wing. Partly out of laziness, I wrote a 6502 emulator in 68000 using PDS Assembler macros, so we could reuse all the logic from the Commodore 64 version

TIMELINE

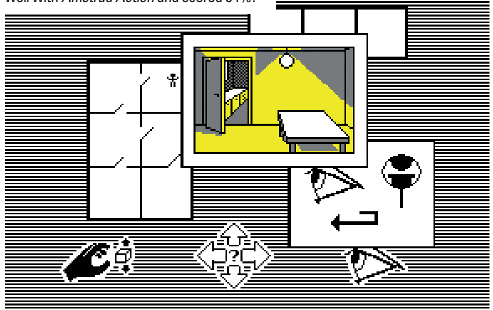
- 1983 – BENNI NOTARAIANNI JOINS THORN EMI GAMES DIVISION
- 1984 – BENNI N AND JOHN W SET UP THE ELECTRONIC PENCIL COMPANY
- 1984 – EPC SIGN UP WITH MARJACQ MICROS LTD AND WIN *TFP* CONTRACT
- 1984 – DEVELOPMENT ON *TFP* BEGINS
- 1985 – ANNA W STARTS WORKING FOR EPC
- 1985 – JOHN WILSON LEAVES EPC
- 1985 – RUPERT BOWATER JOINS EPC TO WORK ON *TFP* (C64) WITH BENNI
- 1985 – *TFP* (C64, SPECTRUM) IS RELEASED
- 1985 – EPC CONTRACTED TO DESIGN *ZOIDS* AND CODE LEAD C64 VERSION
- 1986 – PAUL N AND RUPERT B SET UP BINARY VISION
- 1986 – *ZOIDS* (C64, SPECTRUM, CPC, MSX) IS RELEASED
- 1986 – EPC CONTRACTED TO PRODUCE CHANNEL 4'S *CHART SHOW* VISUALS
- 1987 – EPC CONTRACTED TO CONVERT *ARMAGEDDON MAN* TO 16-BIT
- 1988 – WORK BEGINS ON *BROADSWORD* RPG (ST, AMIGA)
- 1988 – EPC CONTRACTED TO CREATE *SENSIBLE SOCCER* CONVERSION TO 16-BIT
- 1989 – *SENSIBLE SOCCER* 16-BIT RELEASED
- 1989 – EPC CREATE GAMES FOR ITV GAMESHOW *STEAL*
- 1989 – RAINBIRD CANCEL *BROADSWORD* DEVELOPMENT
- 1990 – BENNI N AND ANNA W RELUCTANTLY CLOSE DOWN EPC


[Amiga] EPC delivered an excellent conversion of Sensible Software's *Microprose Soccer.*




Anna Williams back in the days of EPC. She started off helping on a part-time basis..




[Amstrad] *The Fourth Protocol* went down well with *Amstrad Action* and scored 84%.

unchanged. The emulator replicated all of the op-codes, addressing modes, flags and zero-pages of the 6502 and is still probably the most satisfying thing I think I've ever done in software."

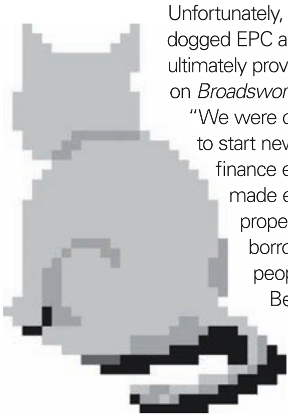
The emulator allowed the original source code to be ported across very quickly, so that development could concentrate on new features and improving the graphics. This approach also meant that during the testing phase, a bug was fixed in the ST and Amiga versions that had been left undiscovered in the Commodore 64 original!

The *Microprose Soccer* conversions were completed both on time and on budget, and they greatly enhanced EPC's reputation for handling both original titles as well as conversions.

The rather unexpected end

In 1988, EPC began work on what would prove to be its final project. *Broadsword* was an isometric role-playing game being developed on the ST and Amiga for Telecomsoft's highly respected Rainbird Software publishing label. The setting was inspired by Warkworth Castle in Northumberland. The player would control a party of adventurers battling monsters, avoiding traps and gaining experience in an isometric dungeon.

"It doesn't sound much by today's standards but we were quite enthusiastic about it at the time," remembers Benni.



Unfortunately, the problem that had dogged EPC almost from day one would ultimately prove rather fatal while working on *Broadsword*.

"We were caught in the trap of having to start new projects in order to finance existing ones. We never made enough to finance EPC properly and I had to keep borrowing money to pay people's wages," explains Benni with regret.

Ultimately, *Broadsword* proved to be too ambitious. EPC simply didn't have the resources to complete the videogame as originally envisaged. Rainbird eventually cancelled and the lack of cash flow meant that EPC could no longer afford to pay its employees. H Wing Lai left to form a new development company with John Gibbons, leaving Benni and Anna with an extremely hard decision to make.

"Anna and I had lived far too long on the poverty line and I thought enough is enough, so we closed EPC down and got proper jobs," says Benni. Jacqui Lyons managed to interest Activision, but without any time or resources to continue working on it, *Broadsword* was eventually abandoned and the final vestiges of EPC were laid to rest.

"It was awful when we realised that we couldn't continue working on the tiny amount of money that was coming in," explains Anna. "We were a small company employing several people and we felt really responsible for everyone. We were never in business just to make money. We had always wanted to make the best computer games we could – which probably explains it all really!"

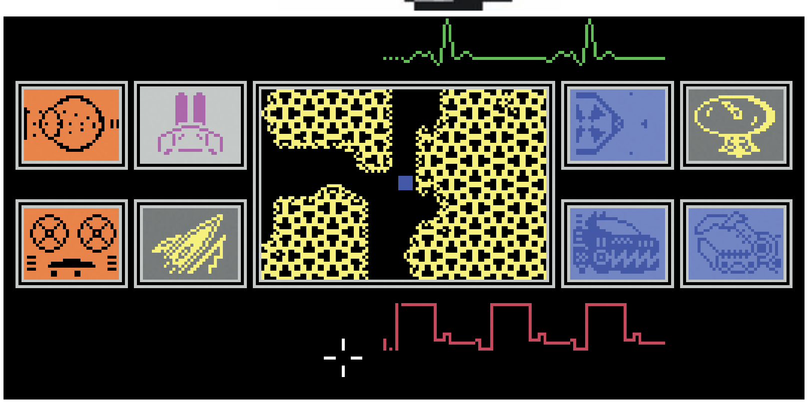
The last words rightly belong to Benni Notaraianni. "Although we had some of the best and most interesting characters working for us, for some reason we couldn't quite get it together. While others were making a roaring success in the games market, we ended up struggling our way through. It was probably a combination of lack of funds and trying to do stuff too far ahead of the times. Still, I consider myself lucky to have met and worked with so many wonderful people and to have had so much fun on the way. So in this regard I think EPC was a roaring success."

POLISHING OFF THE APPLE

Tony Bickley looks back and recalls what happened as the Apple II conversion of *The Fourth Protocol* was being finished: "It was late into the night and I needed some space to put the final build on. The only thing to hand was a previous Master disc. Unfortunately, I told the Apple II to select the Source disc…"

Benni Notaraianni picks up the story… "At that point we both realised that the floppy drive clunking was the sound of the last couple of days work being wiped! Tony took it quite badly and grabbed a chair, squatted down, put the chair over his head and started squealing like an animal in distress," or as Tony describes it… "I was keening like a medieval hag at a funeral!"

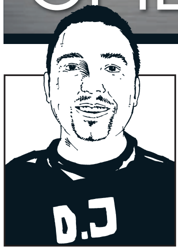
Thankfully, it didn't take long to recreate the code and the Apple II conversion was finished and released. Despite the seriousness of the situation at the time, Benni still recalls the moment with great humour. "It was the funniest thing to see!" while Tony's hair still stands on end just thinking about it!





CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you actually want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can picked up for less than a fiver

BLUE LIGHTNING

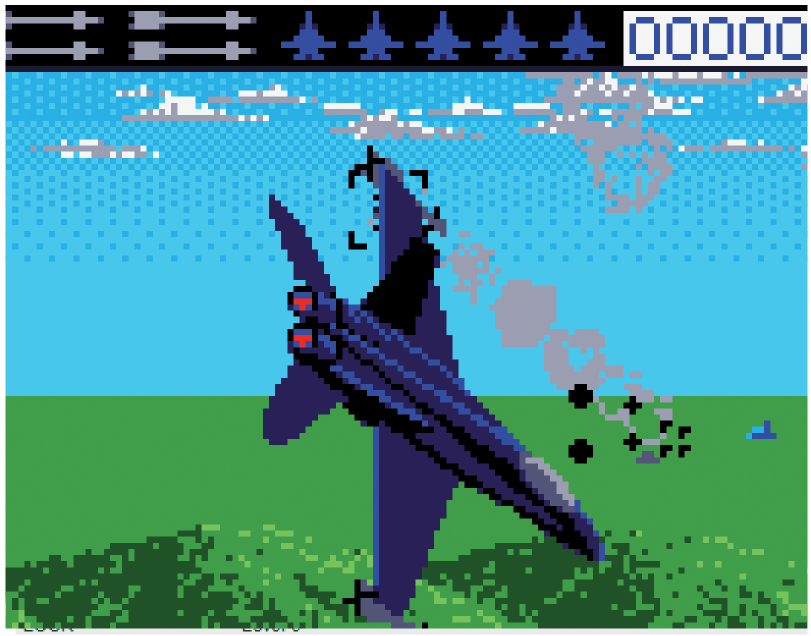
- **SYSTEM:** ATARI LYNX
- **RELEASED:** 1989
- **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- **DEVELOPER:** EPYX



If there's one great thing about the Atari Lynx, it's that it boasted some superb arcade conversions during its short lifespan. *Roadblasters, Joust, Ms Pac-Man, Rampage,* Rampart, *S.T.U.N. Runner* – the list seems virtually endless, and it's a testament to Atari that the machine was able to last as long as it did with hardly any support from third parties. Interestingly, though, one of the Lynx's very best arcade games wasn't actually an arcade game at all. That game is Epyx's excellent *Blue Lightning*. It's an utterly exhilarating little blaster that still manages to impress some 20 years after its original release.

Trumpeted at the time as being a version of *After Burner* that you could finally play in the palm of your hand, *Blue Lightning* very nearly fulfilled those initial lofty claims and proved to be an incredibly accomplished achievement. It certainly wasn't as blindingly fast as Yu Suzuki's *Top Gun*-inspired arcade shooter, but it was nevertheless impressive and proved just how powerful Atari's handheld actually was.

From the moment your hi-tech jet took off, you were immediately thrown into one of the most amazing-looking handheld games that the world – at that time, at least – had ever seen. The Lynx's sprite engine was thrown into overdrive as the machine threw out beautifully scaled planes that constantly harassed the player. Then there was the detailed landscape that scaled smoothly (and speedily) below you, giving an impressive sense of speed. You could argue that the nine levels of *Blue Lightning* were fairly generic – if you weren't dogfighting over farmland, it was against a canyon or a snowy wasteland – but considering the age of the machine, it would be churlish to criticise *Blue Lightning*'s aesthetics to any real degree.



» The final stage is an absolute nightmare; the enemy throws everything but the kitchen sink at you.

It may have only featured nine stages, but there was still a surprising amount of diversity within the actual levels. Unlike *After Burner*, which simply required you to make it unscathed through each level, *Blue Lightning* at least made things a little more varied and required you to do everything from participating in bombing runs, to taking out satellite installations. Looking at it now, those nine stages look rather simplistic and lacking, but, let's face it, that never did *After Burner* any harm.

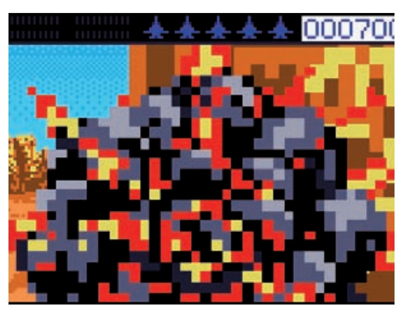
Obviously the real beauty of *Blue Lightning* is that, 20 years after its debut, it can now be picked up for less than a fiver from the likes of eBay or trading forums like the one found on AtariAge. If you do decide to pick this ace little blaster up then be sure to get the later version with the curved lip. Earlier cartridges could be an absolute nightmare to prise out of your machine once it was in, so it's worth double-checking to ensure that you're picking up the right version.

Two decades after its original release, *Blue Lightning* proves that it still has what it takes. Yes it's rather sedate when put up against what's available on newer machines like the GBA, but in amongst its peers it still has no equal. A fantastic arcade blaster that's definitely worth tracking down.





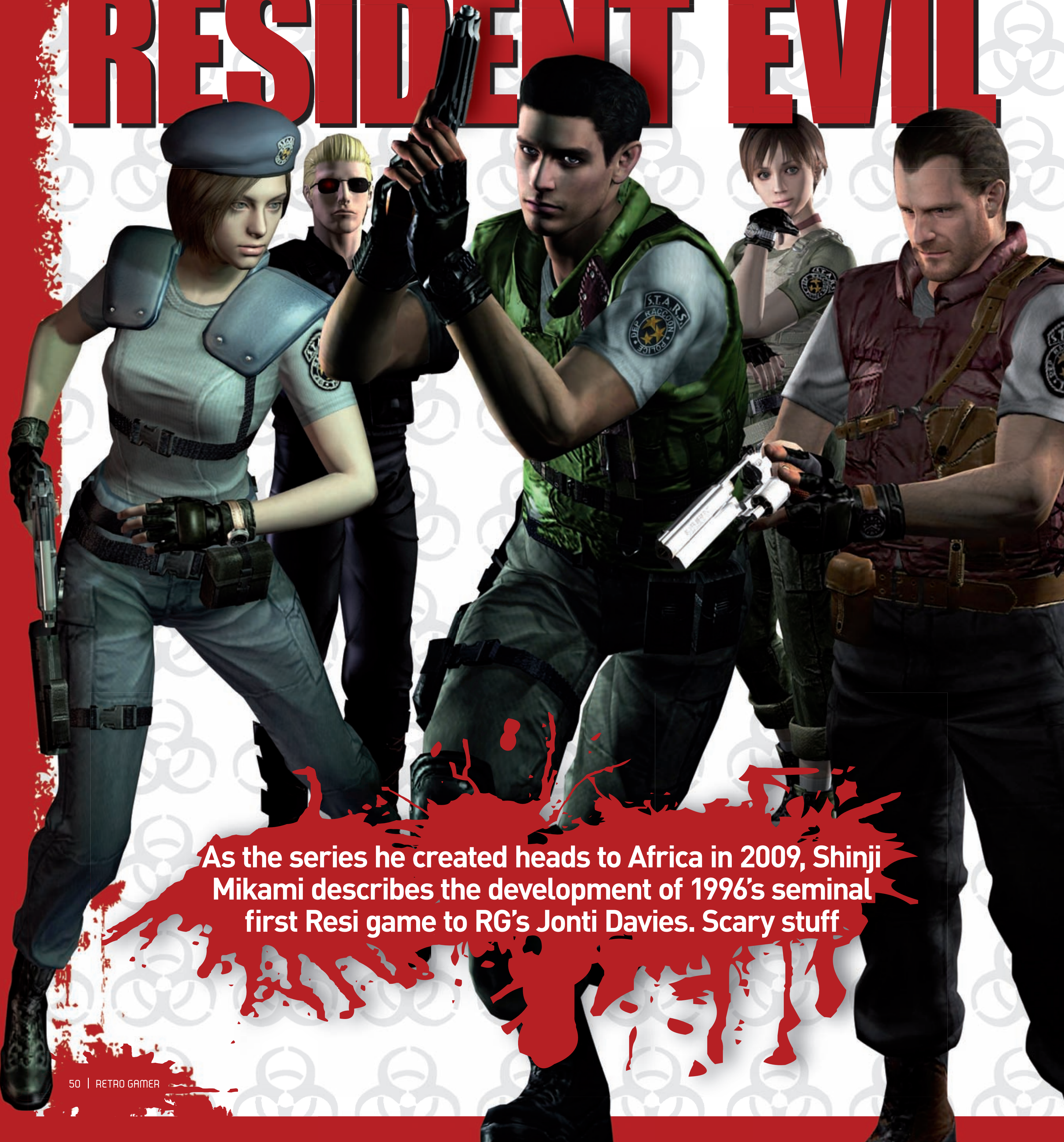
» This snow stage is a breeze as enemies easily stand out.



» Flying into canyon walls is not advised…

THE MAKING OF...

RESIDENT EVIL



As the series he created heads to Africa in 2009, Shinji Mikami describes the development of 1996's seminal first Resi game to RG's Jonti Davies. Scary stuff



» [PlayStation] Brooding and atmospheric… it's amazing to think that the first six months of *Resident Evil* was handled soley by Mikami. A rare example of a newer game being led by one man's vision.



» [PlayStation] While many found fault with *Resident Evil's* cumbersome controls, the direction of cut-scenes was absolutely superb. Only Hideo Kojima's *Metal Gear* franchise comes close.

Shinji Mikami is a very likeable guy who is not afraid to speak his mind. For a start, he says, the *Resident Evil* title is a "stupid" one. The Western title for his made-in-Japan horror epic is, he reckons, completely nonsensical. (Capcom America proposed the Anglicised term; Mikami had no say in its selection.) *Biohazard*, the series' original Japanese title, is the only term he will use as we discuss the games. And that's fair enough: after all, he is the creator of *Resi*– sorry, *Biohazard*.

"*Biohazard*'s starting point came when my boss at the time – Fujiwara-san [Tokuro Fujiwara, Capcom's general manager] – told me to make a horror title using the game system of *Sweet Home*," Mikami explains. The game he's referring to here was a minor hit for Capcom on Nintendo's Famicom at the end of 1989, itself a videogame adaptation of a Japanese horror flick.

The parallels between *Sweet Home* and *Biohazard* are fairly extensive – *Biohazard*'s door-opening sequences are lifted from *Sweet Home*, while some of the games' settings are shared – yet it would be unfair to both titles if we were to suggest that *Biohazard* was a mere copy of *Sweet Home*. It wasn't – Mikami's game brought too many new ideas to the table to be written off as nothing more than a homage. Still, there's no denying that it drew inspiration from certain aspects of that old cassette.

"My first aim," Mikami recalls, "was to create something that could provide the scariness of an amusement park's Haunted House, at home. For me, the things I've always been scared of the most are ghosts, so I was considering producing a game full of evil spirits. Thinking about it, though, in the capacity of a game, there wouldn't be any real feeling of exhilaration if you were shooting at, or attacking, ghosts. When I realised that during the initial planning stages of development, I decided to scrap the ghost idea and find a different type of enemy threat."

With the notion of a Haunted House-style horror game ditched, Mikami went back to the drawing board and sketched a different, yet equally scary, proposition: "I ended up realising that the game's enemies needed to be monsters of some description, as close as possible to humans in form, rather than spirits. Yes, I thought – zombies! At that time I recalled the film, *Dawn Of The Dead*; I loved that film. It was unfortunate, as far as the audience was concerned, that they couldn't survive; but with a game, the players could use their own techniques and thinking in order to survive the experience. I thought that this difference between horror games and horror movies could be something wonderful. That was the moment when I conceived *Biohazard*."

It might sound as though Mikami is being a spot egotistical in claiming that *Biohazard* was his alone, but it's entirely true. "For the first six months of development," Mikami explains, "I was the 'team'. Six months down the line I was joined by another planner, but after three months of working together he left to do development work on another project. From month nine onwards, the number of personnel suddenly increased to 15; and from that time on, the team gradually increased in number

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHERS:** CAPCOM
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE (PRODUCTION STUDIO 4)
» **RELEASED:** 1996
» **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



"I KNEW THAT IF BIOHAZARD WASN'T A BIG SUCCESS THERE WAS A DANGER THAT CAPCOM WOULD FACE BANKRUPTCY"
BIOHAZARD WAS MAKE-OR-BREAK FOR CAPCOM, SAYS SHINJI MIKAMI

MORE FROM MIKAMI

ALADDIN (SNES, 1993)
Shinji Mikami worked as a 'planner' on this charming Disney-licensed 2D platformer. It's par for the course, really, but the lush graphics and neatly conceived level design makes for a game that can still be enjoyed today.



GOOF TROOP (SNES, 1994)
By the time he was given another crack at turning Disney properties into entertaining videogame fare, Mikami had been promoted to the role of lead game designer. *Goof Troop* borrows heavily from *A Link To The Past*, but that only assures its quality.



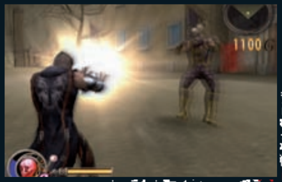
DINO CRISIS (PLAYSTATION/DREAMCAST, 1999)
Mikami worked as producer on this *Resident Evil*-meets-*Jurassic Park* and, surprisingly, it was nowhere near as bad as its hodgepodge concept suggested it could be. Definitely worth a play through.



P.N.03 (GAMECUBE, 2003)
This underrated GameCube classic was directed by Shinji Mikami as part of his and Capcom's drive to support Nintendo's last 'traditional' games console. It's a frantic and stylish shooter that continues to resonate half a decade on.



GOD HAND (PLAYSTATION 2, 2006)
Another unfairly dismissed Shinji Mikami game, *God Hand* is a darkly comedic beat-'em-up/adventure crossover with the kind of outlandish, bizarre move sets that you'd most often see in a Suda 51 production. Quirky, but so much fun.



HEROES AND VILLAINS

CHRIS REDFIELD
Mikami's favourite Biohazard protagonist is also, he laughs, quite ugly and not particularly cool. But that's the way he was designed, and Chris Redfield's battle against the zombie masses is every bit as tough as he looks.

JILL VALENTINE
Hardly a typical soft/sensitive female lead, Jill Valentine can easily hold her own against rabid zombified dogs and the like. She may not be quite as strong as Chris, but she does have greater multi-tasking abilities and is able to carry a ton of items while picking locks.

BARRY BURTON
Good old Barry is Jill's reliable buddy throughout the course of her adventure. His comedy one-liners (intentional or otherwise) never fail to ease the tension, but he's also a mean shot, easily popping bullets in putrid zombie flesh.

REBECCA CHAMBERS
The essential nurse character, capable of restoring people to health and stirring chemical concoctions, eventually becomes playable in *Biohazard*. She ends up supporting Chris during his adventure.

ALBERT WESKER
One of Mikami's favourite Biohazard enemies, Wesker is the kind of naggingly suspicious guy who you might expect to crop up in the Sixties *Batman* TV series. The real genius of Wesker is that nothing is particularly clear.

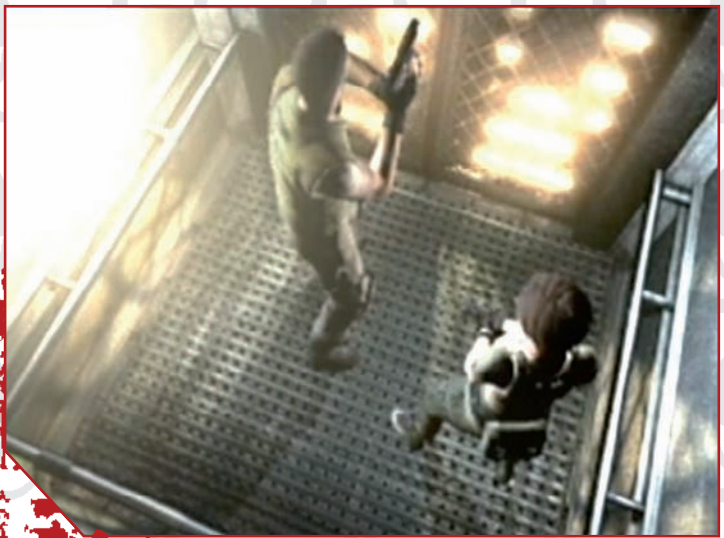
until, towards the end of development, we had more than 50 people working on *Biohazard*. On the planning/design side of things, [Hideki] Kamiya, [Hiroki] Kato and [Kazunori] Kadoi were the core members – the foundations. In the graphics department, [Jun] Takeuchi looked after character animation, and [Motoji] Fujita and [Ippei] Masuda were largely responsible for the background rendering. Programming and system development was essentially down to [Yasuhiro] Anpo. [Katsutoshi] Karatsuma worked on gameplay features, [Kiyohiko] Sakata on in-game events, and [Ippo] Yamada on sound."

Once the central team had been established, Capcom's Production Studio 4 quickly set about turning Mikami's ideas into tangible, playable realities. An early build of the game featured an over-the-shoulder camera system similar to that which would eventually be used in *Resident Evil 4*, but it soon became obvious the PlayStation hardware was not up to the task of managing such ambitious design. (At least, it didn't appear to be capable of such feats back in 1995.)

"You couldn't really call *Biohazard* 'beautiful' now," Mikami modestly admits. "It was incredibly difficult to produce the game for the PlayStation hardware back then. Initially it was intended to be a full 3D production, but we had to give up on that idea and modify *Biohazard* to use pre-rendering: if we hadn't done that, it would have been impossible to properly realise my plans for the game. For that reason [the switch to pre-rendered environments] the graphics became exceptionally good, though operability was sacrificed to achieve that. It was very difficult to manufacture the characters while reducing their polygon counts to a reasonable level."

The "operability… sacrificed" that Mikami speaks of is likely a euphemism for the notorious clunkiness (pre-*RE4*) of the characters' movement, with navigation of pre-rendered environments tied to an awkward D-pad control system where left and right became rotational inputs and up/down effected a strict forwards/backwards motion. Controlling Jill and Chris was the adventure game equivalent of steering a double-decker bus around a karting circuit. Since his original briefing from his manager had quite specifically requested a horror game, Mikami was determined to create something that would (in an in-game sense, literally) scare players to death.

"First of all," he says, "I began by coming up with a scenario that had an eerie atmosphere. The critically important point here was to create a world where you could see some evidence that people had been living there, and then introduce zombies so that players would happen to meet them within that kind of environment." The game's opening scene and scripting neatly emphasises how Mikami would set about achieving his goals; before Jill Valentine takes her first D-pad-guided steps into her scenario, some scrappy pixel text sets the tone: "They have escaped into the mansion… where they thought it was safe. Yet…" Fortunately, not all of the tension-building devices used in *Biohazard* were quite so crude. The door-opening scenes that linked rooms together were deliberately restrained – a door, a black



» [GameCube] Jill and Barry. When they're not backing each other up, they're sharing howlingly bad dialogue. Oh the humanity.





» **[PlayStation]** *Resident Evil* may be getting on now, but certain aspects of its design still manage to impress.



» [PlayStation] You'll never forget the time you meet your first zombie…

abyss of a background, and the cleanly sampled sound of a handle being turned – and were extremely effective in boosting both the player's fear and anticipation levels.

"Another significant area was to ensure that a sense of fear would be generated by the events in the game," Mikami continues. "The motivation for this was that I wanted to shock players with the perfect timing of events, while also having strong control over the player's mentality, so that the fear factor would become self-reinforcing thereafter. We used features such as the zombies' moans and their footsteps as omens throughout the flow of the game. Even if you knew before looking round a corner that a zombie was going to be there, we set up blind spots so that players wouldn't be able to see the zombies [immediately] and that in turn produced an uneasy feeling that caused players to feel afraid. I remember thinking if the enemies were only scary because of the possibility of 'game over', it wouldn't be sufficient for me to reach my goal with *Biohazard*. There had to be more to it than that."

"I WANTED TO SHOCK PLAYERS WITH PERFECT TIMING WHILE HAVING STRONG CONTROL OVER THE PLAYER'S MENTALITY"

MIKAMI HAD EVERYTHING PLANNED

Intriguingly, Mikami says that *Biohazard* could even have adopted a humorous angle (as in genuine, planned humour – not the occasionally funny scripting that cropped up in English-language translations of the game) were it not for a lack of development time. "In the planning stage," he reveals, "I had come up with an idea for a method where the game could switch to being a comedy after the third week of gameplay. I ended up discarding the idea when it became apparent that it would take an unreasonable amount of time to implement. I personally felt that the horror and comedy genres had many things in common and were very closely linked. I think if I'd had a chance to experiment more, the results could have been really entertaining."

Regardless of Mikami's decision to not turn *Biohazard* into the videogame equal of *Scary Movie* (probably a wise decision), his vision of how he wanted the game to be was largely realised. "Top of my list [of favourite things about *Biohazard*]," he starts, "is how we were able to realise a kind of scariness that would automatically put players on edge, even without them being consciously aware of it. I was also really pleased with the graphics: in its day, at least, *Biohazard* looked real. Another of my favourite aspects was how the sound effects and music would make the player feel intimidated. And, of course, I was very pleased with how we presented the zombies in the game."

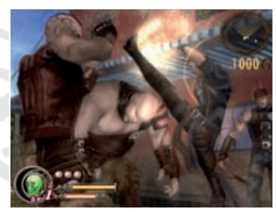
All of these elements – and others, such as the consistent and satisfying (if a little quaint) puzzles, the item-location tasks, the excellent FMV cut-scenes and the associated charismatic voice acting of the game's characters – combined to produce an experience that was a little different from

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

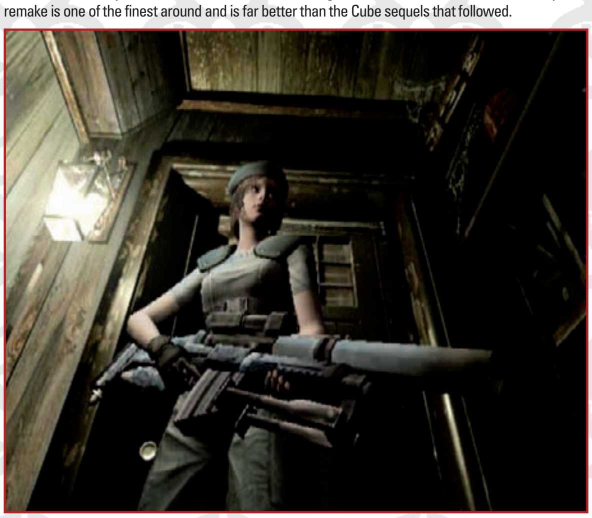
DINO CRISIS
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION 2, DREAMCAST, PC
YEAR: 1999

P.N. 03
SYSTEM: GAMECUBE
YEAR: 2003

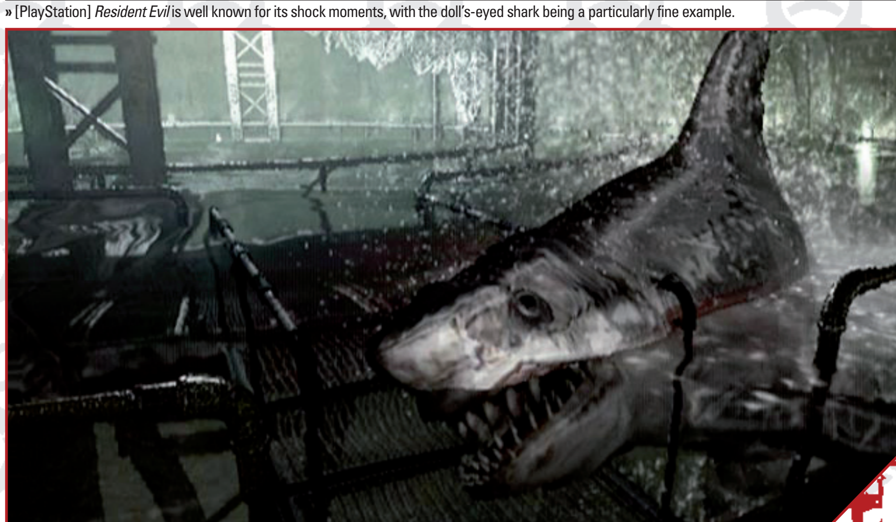
GOD HAND (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: PLAYSTATION 2
YEAR: 2006



» [GameCube] Shinji Mikami was ecstatic about working on Nintendo's GameCube. His subsequent remake is one of the finest around and is far better than the Cube sequels that followed.



» [PlayStation] *Resident Evil* is well known for its shock moments, with the doll's-eyed shark being a particularly fine example.



THE MAKING OF... RESIDENT EVIL



» [GameCube] Chris Redfield is also in *Resident Evil 5*, albeit with bigger muscles.


» [PlayStation] If you never jumped when the dogs made their dramatic entrance then you either lied about it or never played the game in the first place.

previously available attempts at the genre. Mikami's ascent from working as a planner on a few Disney-licensed SNES games to being charged with producing a next-gen horror game may seem like an odd career path, but he has always been a fan of darker entertainment. (He recently joked that it's no coincidence his initials are interchangeable with those of 'sadomasochism'.)

When Mikami first started planning *Biohazard* in January of 1994, neither Sony's PlayStation nor Sega's Saturn were on the market and Nintendo was in pole position in Japan (thanks to the broad success of the Super Famicom). *Biohazard* was never planned as a PlayStation exclusive, and logically Capcom was determined to hedge its bets by getting the game to appear on both upcoming formats. But that was easier said than done. "Initially," Mikami says, "we were moving ahead with simultaneous development on both formats [PlayStation and Saturn]. We carried on like that for about a year, but then that development program had to be suspended. It was hard enough making *Biohazard* for one piece of new, original hardware – developing it for two types of hardware at the same time was just too difficult because of a lack of development staff and a shortage of the necessary skills. That's why we decided to whittle things down to just the one console version." The Saturn version eventually arrived in July of 1997, some 16 months after the PlayStation original had been released in Japan, which was quite a blow for Sega.

You might well imagine that Capcom was confident it had a potential PlayStation hit on its hands, yet Mikami maintains that his employer was not completely supportive of the project. "During the development phase, I felt that the project wasn't being appreciated at all." It turns out that *Biohazard* very nearly didn't happen, as Mikami explains: "Capcom's consulting company at the time made a report that included a comment written like this: 'Discontinue *Biohazard* project.' I went mad! After seeing that, it just made me feel even more strongly that I would complete *Bio*, no matter what. And in the end, *Biohazard* was not discontinued. As I had suspected, it was Fujiwara-san who called for Capcom to let us continue with the *Biohazard* project. I only heard from Fujiwara-san himself roughly ten years after *Biohazard* was finished that he'd intervened in such a way, but it apparently saved the project…"

Even though *Biohazard* was allowed to continue growing, Mikami admits that the development process was not particularly smooth. Part of the problem was the inexperienced staff (even Mikami himself was making his directorial debut on this project). "Except for myself, most of the staff on the *Biohazard* team

> "CAPCOM'S CONSULTING COMPANY AT THE TIME MADE A REPORT THAT INCLUDED THE COMMENT: 'DISCONTINUE BIOHAZARD PROJECT'" SHINJI MIKAMI EXPLAINS HOW RESIDENT EVIL NEARLY DIDN'T HAPPEN



» [PlayStation] The name's Wesker. Albert Wesker… Quite possibly one of the coolest videogame baddies of all time.





» [GameCube] The visuals for Capcom's Resi update were a massive improvement over the originals and still look ace today.

[were] newcomers to Capcom," Mikami reflects. "The team generally wasn't very experienced at all, and it meant we had to go through an awful lot of trial-and-error experimentation during the development process. In spite of that, the team had an incredibly positive attitude, and I'm sure that was connected to how we were able to produce such a good game."

Although the atmosphere inside Production Studio 4 was a positive one, Capcom struggled to keep the *Biohazard* team together. Mikami explains: "I remember how, because developing *Biohazard* was too difficult for them, one by one staff would resign from the job. I think everyone felt as though they didn't know what was what. It was a feverish atmosphere in [the *Bio*] development team. Along the way, it got to the point where our development tools weren't sufficient for what we wanted to do, so to compensate we worked double shifts to ensure that the team was working around the clock."

For those who had remained onboard, the latter stages of development were predictably manic – but also, by the sounds of it, a bit of a fun riot. "The final stage of development lasted around six months," Mikami says, "and during that time the team were mostly living at work. It was a case of 'Super Hard Work' until 3am every night. At the time everyone was considered equal, and once it got to be past midnight in the studio our spirits became really high. People would be running around the development floor… We'd group together in pairs and push other development staff, who were sitting on chairs [with wheels], into the elevator, then press the button to send them to whichever floor we wanted them to go to, and shout 'Sayonara!' We had all these funny customs," he laughs.

While Mikami and the team somehow managed to enjoy the hell of the last six months' work, there was also some awareness of the predicament Capcom found itself in at the time. Investors were becoming increasingly concerned about the profitability of the Osaka-based developer-publisher, and without any sugar daddy at the top of the company to rely on (the likes of Sega and Namco were bankrolled by mega-rich owners, but Capcom has always been a more humble affair) murmurs of the dreaded 'B' word began to circulate. "Once the project was complete," Mikami says, "all of the staff felt a sense of accomplishment and they really celebrated its completion. On the other hand, I just felt relieved – and I seemed to be the only one who was completely burnt out. I knew that if *Biohazard* wasn't a big success there was a danger that Capcom would face bankruptcy, so I felt very strongly that I'd fulfilled my responsibility."

In the end, *Biohazard* did the business required of it and *Resident Evil* (to Mikami's chagrin) became a household name throughout the western world. "Biohazard sold more than twice the number of copies we were anticipating it might sell," Mikami clarifies. "To be honest, I was surprised by how successful it was. It was just a happy accident that the PlayStation market and the saleability of *Biohazard* matched so perfectly. I think we very lucky."

With *Biohazard*, an international hit almost in spite of itself, the gore and scariness of the finished game only seeming to encourage greater sales and Capcom inevitably demanded more of the same. "Once the first game was finished," Mikami says, "Capcom told me immediately to make a sequel. Only, I was told to redefine my role for *Biohazard 2* as a producer, and at the time that really made me feel down," he sighs. Mikami's good friend Hideki Kamiya took on director's duties for the sequel, and it wasn't until 2002's *Biohazard 0* prequel that Mikami would again have chance to direct the action himself. As the template for what would become one of Capcom's most revered series, however, Mikami's creation of the original *Biohazard* game was sufficient to keep the sequels coming right through to 2009.

RESIDENT EVIL SEQUELS

RESIDENT EVIL: DIRECTOR'S CUT (1997)
Released ostensibly to keep fans satisfied until *RE2* was eventually complete, *Resident Evil: Director's Cut* featured a collection of aesthetic alterations and DualShock support. It was bundled with a playable demo of the following year's sequel.



RESIDENT EVIL 2 (1998)
With Shinji Mikami moved to the role of producer, Hideki Kamiya took on the mantle of director for the first time in his career. Mikami simply oversaw Kamiya's work and made changes wherever necessary. A hugely successful sequel, even if it wasn't as scary…



RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS (1999)
Originally intended as an act of fan service, a side-story developed specifically for dedicated *Resident Evil* followers (its project name was *Biohazard 1.9*), *Nemesis* ended up as something of a jumble once Mikami's boss had told him to scrap that idea and make a proper sequel.



RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA (2000)
Moving away from the pre-rendered environments utilised by the first three games in the series, *Code: Veronica* was touted as a Dreamcast exclusive but was eventually ported to the PS2 and GameCube in slightly modified form. A real highlight for the series.



RESIDENT EVIL 0 (2002)
Rebecca Chambers returned as a main protagonist in this prequel to the first *Biohazard* outing. While it ended up as a GameCube title, *RE0* was originally planned as an N64-exclusive. One thing that's particularly noteworthy about it is its nifty character-swapping mechanic.



RESIDENT EVIL 4 (2004)
One of the best videogames of its generation, *Resident Evil 4* took the series in a new direction – via a camera change and a switch to real-time 3D – to at last achieve what Mikami had originally aspired to create in the mid-Nineties. The Wii version is our favourite.



RESIDENT EVIL: THE UMBRELLA CHRONICLES (2007)
Mikami had nothing to do with this one, having left Capcom after *RE4*. Still, *The Umbrella Chronicles*' odd perspective – Albert Wesker talks players through *House Of The Dead* territory – certainly adds some novelty to the series' mainline.



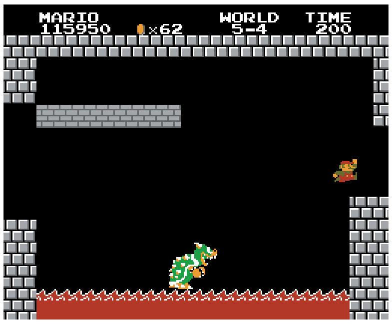
RESIDENT EVIL 5 (2009)
Resident Evil 5 arrives five years after *RE4*, with Mikami now as nothing more than a distant spectator. Its African setting has been controversial, but its online co-op gameplay promises great things. Mikami says he probably won't bother playing it, as its inevitable flaws will annoy him.



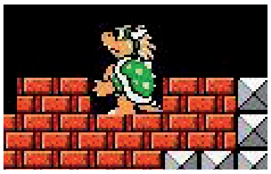
BOSS/RUSH

WHERE WE SQUARE OFF AGAINST THAT END-OF-LEVEL BADDIE FROM YESTERYEAR...

BOWSER



GAME INFO



- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES - WII
- » **RELEASED:** 1985 TO PRESENT
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO

Bowser is the king of the Koopas; a comic race of prehistoric-looking turtle-like creatures that live in an enchanting world of bricks with a race of mushroom-headed trolls and a beautiful princess. Although the Mario Brothers' first tussle with Bowser would be in *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island* on the Super Nintendo, the fire-breathing antagonist's first videogame appearance, and the first time anyone ever saw him, was in *Super Mario Bros.* on the NES.

Bowser's scheme, as it is in the majority of the *Super Mario Bros.* games, is to kidnap the princess, overthrow the fungal monarch and become king, but then two Italian plumbers get sucked through a warp pipe and involuntarily find themselves getting caught up in the middle of the takeover. And so, after ducking and jumping through the many turtle-infested stages of Mushroom Kingdom, our heroes have to negotiate the several lava-loaded screens that make up the eight castles in the game.

The brothers' first sign that Bowser is near comes in the form of a squished fireball travelling vertically across the middle of the screen. When the player eventually encounters Bowser – owing to his size and sporadic flame (and later hammer) attacks – it's customary for a sense of panic to set in. But don't let appearances deceive you; defeating this boss is really quite simple. If either plumber is in their fireball-lobbing state you can simply blast away Bowser with a few timely fireballs. If not, you must carefully hop over him and touch the axe sitting at the back of the screen. One touch of this weapon removes the bridge that Bowser is standing on and sends him to a satisfying fiery grave.

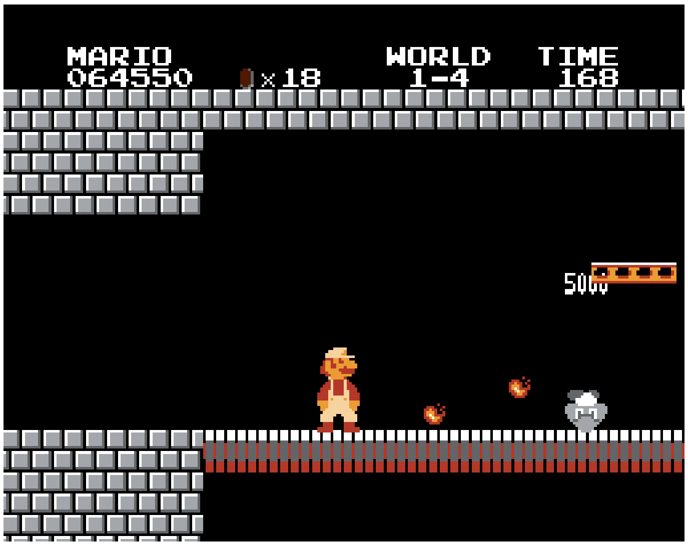
In what turns out to be a clever twist, it's then revealed that the Bowser you've just vanquished is actually a doppelganger (killing him with the fireball method will force him to reveal his true form) and that the prisoners locked up inside the first seven castles are in fact everyday mushroom folk of Mushroom Kingdom. It's only when the player reaches Bowser's final bastion (in world 8-4) the brothers get to finally topple the true Bowser, claim their princess and restore peace back to the kingdom.

That was just the beginning, though. The tumultuous battle between the Mario Bros. and Bowser has been fought through the entire breadth of the game series. The trio's most notable spats include *Super Mario Bros. 3* (the first time we see him with his mane of flame-red hair), which found the scaly antagonist joined by his kids, the Koopalings – a squad of seven boisterous brats that played the role of sub-bosses, and *Mario 64* where Bowser (and Mario) is wonderfully realised in 3D. Incidentally, this is the first time we ever get to hear Bowser roar.

Throughout the years though, Nintendo has clearly opted to downplay Bowser's evilness. In *Super Mario RPG*, Mario and Bowser are forced to team up to fight a new common threat, while Bowser's appearances in both the *Mario Kart* and *Super Smash Bros.* franchises have depicted him as a bit of lovable rogue, softening up his menacing exterior and making him quite endearing. Whatever your impression of Bowser, one thing is clear: this big lug is still one of the most iconic end-game bosses in history.

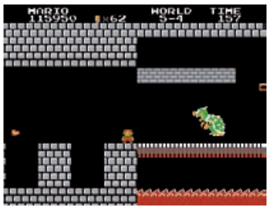


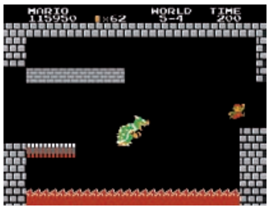
» Bowser as he appears in the wonderful *Super Mario 64*. Isn't it absolutely amazing what you can achieve with a few polygons nowadays...



» Defeat the faux Bowsers using fireballs and you'll reveal their true form - Goombas in Bowser fancy dress costumes.

BOWSER'S APPEARANCES IN BOTH THE MARIO KART AND SUPER SMASH BROS. FRANCHISES HAVE DEPICTED HIM AS A BIT OF LOVABLE ROGUE


» Without the fireballs we are forced to time our assault on the axe very carefully. Well, here goes…


» Ah, relief, we've managed to get the drop on the evil King Koopa. See you in hell you big smiling bipedal turtle.

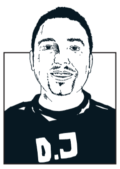

» Eh! Your Princess is in another castle. That's just typical. Nice shower cap, by the way.

FLICKY

THE AGE OLD GAME OF CAT AND... BIRD?



- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **RELEASED:** 1991
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+



HISTORY

The first thing that hits you when returning to Sega's *Flicky* is just how horrendous its boxart still is. Released at a time when Sega felt that the epitome of cool was to plaster a (admittedly distinctive if non-aesthetic) grid on the Mega Drive boxes instead of sticking with the excellent art that adorned its many Japanese releases, *Flicky*'s art looks very, very dated.

Luckily the cartridge that's within its plastic innards contains a title that's still as enjoyable to play through as it ever was, and our newly found love for *Flicky* (available soon on Sega's new 360 and PS3 compilation) is all thanks to Sony's *The Last Guy*.

Playing through the PSN release recently has made us appreciate just how clever *Flicky* actually is, and while it's by no means a masterpiece, it's a title whose presence we've often scoffed at whenever we've seen it included on past compilations.

Based on an old Sega coin-op from 1984, Flicky (who has since been integrated into Sonic's universe) is a mother on a mission, who must traverse her simple multiplatform environment to collect up her escaped Chirps and protect them from hungry cats and Iggy the Iguana. Collected Chirps follow her in a single file until she successfully leads them to the stage's exit – you'll get more points the more Chirps you save at any one time – and there's a grand total of 48 different levels to negotiate.

Flicky may be a cute bird, but she's far from defenceless and can use various items that are scattered around each stage to defeat any moggies that stray too close to her. The wraparound screen also works in the bird and player's favour, as it proves to be a great diversion tactic for the later stages.

Also available on Sega's Master System (although it sadly bypassed the 8-bit computers of the time) *Flicky* remains a challenging, fun game that holds some surprisingly tough gameplay under its cute and fluffy exterior.




FLICKY
RD. 1

SOMETHING OLD SOMETHING NEW



Game Title: Pac-Man
System: Various Mobile Phones
Interviewee: Barry O'Neill, President Namco Bandai Europe

RETRO GAMER LOOKS AT CLASSIC FRANCHISES THAT ARE BEING REVIVED FOR NEXT-GENERATION SYSTEMS. THIS MONTH WE LOOK AT NAMCO'S RECENTLY RELEASED MOBILE VERSION OF PAC-MAN

Why did you decide it was time to update *Pac-Man*?
The original mobile version of *Pac-Man* was developed in the early days of mobile gaming, when we had tight limits on the size of games you could put on a mobile, and the feature sets of the phones was limited. Rather than incrementally improving the game we decided to create the new version with a much improved user interface, multiplayer features and global leader board. This gives us a fresh new game, with features that match the current crop of mobile handsets.

How long did *Pac-Man Mobile* take to create?
Typically mobile game development projects run from six months to a year. *Pac-Man* was originally created in 1980, though, so I suppose you could say this latest mobile version represents nearly 30 years of evolution!

How big would you say the team that worked on *Pac-Man Mobile* was?
It's difficult to estimate that, given that the game has evolved over such a long period of time, and involved development teams in Europe and Japan.

Was there any involvement at all from *Pac-Man*'s original creator?
There was not a specific role in this version but, of course, Mr Iwatani is familiar with the various *Pac-Man* development projects. Much of the inspiration for the multiplayer elements came from *Pac-Man Vs* on the Game Cube.

Is it a very difficult process to convert games to the mobile phone?
Yes, it is. There are a variety of reasons for this, but the main one is the huge number of different types of mobiles that are out there that have to be supported – it's over 1,000 models. They range from very basic models with relatively low performance, to high-end smart-phones. Adjusting the timing on each phone is an important factor, as is taking into account different screen resolutions, aspect ratios, keypad layouts, et cetera et cetera. Dealing with this, and the subsequent quality assurance that needs to be carried out is a big overhead for all mobile game developers.

What made you focus on the multiplayer side of Pac-Man?
In Japan we've been working on multiplayer mobile gaming for a long time. Network speeds and low latency means that true head-to-head real-time multiplayer over the mobile network is viable. In the US, Namco Networks has also had great success with *Pool Pro Online*, which is turn based, therefore suited to international mobile systems. We wanted to try a multiplayer game in Europe and felt that enough phones have Bluetooth now to make a head-to-head multiplayer game viable. *Pac-Man* is ideal for this, and we had the history with *Pac-Man Vs* to draw on in terms of a proven gameplay mechanic.

Are there any other multiplayer ideas that never made the final cut?
Of course – we'd really like to make the multiplayer element happen over the mobile networks so you could have players competing head-to-head from all over the world, but this just isn't possible right now. We feel we made a good compromise, though, with the online global leaderboard.

Was the implementation of multiplayer due to the positive reception of the original Game Boy Advance/ Game Cube game?
Personally, I think the GBA/GC game didn't become as widely known as it should have, and it served as a great inspiration for the mobile multiplayer version.

Will there be any competitions to persuade people to upload their high scores?
Having the feature in there allows for all sorts of activities in the future. We can measure not only individual scores, but also aggregate scores by territory, by mobile operator and so on, so there is every possibility we could implement league tables and competitions on a national and international basis.

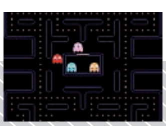
Can we expect similar updates from other classic Namco games in the future?
Yes, we'll be updating many of our classic titles for the same reasons that we updated *Pac-Man*. New features will be considered in the context of each game, but the online leaderboard for *Pac-Man* has been really well received, so we expect that will be common to all of them.

Why exactly do you think *Pac-Man* still remains so popular today?
Pac-Man really has stood the test of time when so many other 'classics' have not. It's the original pursuit game, and so many games since its release are underpinned with variations of this gameplay mechanic. I think *Pac-Man* still delivers the endorphin rush of being hunted, hunted turning hunter, and it encourages risk/reward scenarios in a progressively difficult environment. These are fundamental elements of a great game and it is just as much fun now as it was almost 30 years ago. Technology has changed but human nature hasn't.

And finally, how would you like this new version of *Pac-Man* to be remembered?
Four players in a confined space playing *Pac-Man* multiplayer on mobile leads to some very memorable moments. I'd encourage you to try it out and take your own memories from the experience.

> **"Pac-Man is just as much fun now… technology has changed but human nature hasn't"**
> BARRY O'NEILL ON WHY PAC-MAN IS STILL AROUND TODAY

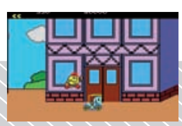
Selected Pac-Man Timeline



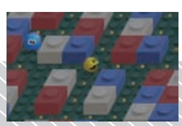
PAC-MAN
Year Released: **1980**
Featured Version: **Arcade**



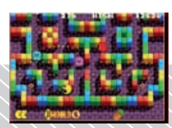
MS PAC-MAN
Year Released: **1981**
Featured Version: **Arcade**



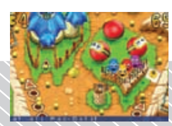
PAC-LAND
Year Released: **1984**
Featured Version: **Arcade**



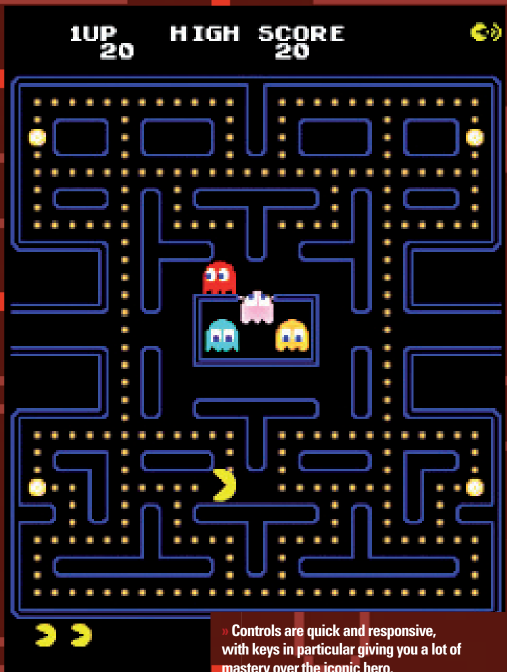
PAC-MANIA
Year Released: **1987**
Featured Version: **Arcade**



PAC-MAN COLLECTION
Year Released: **2001**
Featured Version: **GBA**



PAC-MAN PINBALL
Year Released: **2005**
Featured Version: **GBA**

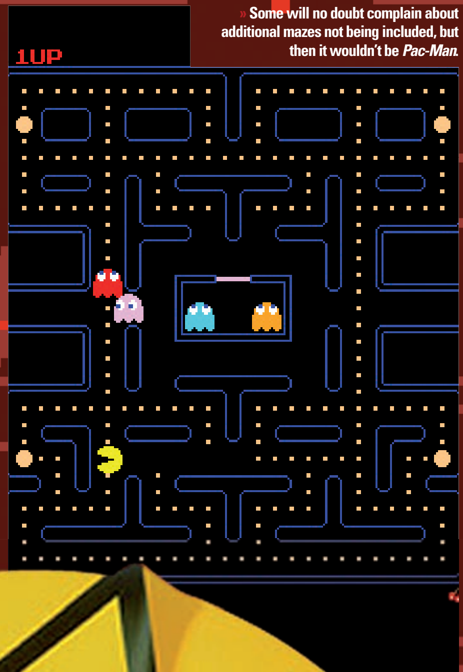


» Controls are quick and responsive, with keys in particular giving you a lot of mastery over the iconic hero.

» First seen on Nintendo's GameCube, *Pac-Man Vs* works brilliantly on the mobile phone. Find friends. Now.



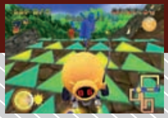
» Some will no doubt complain about additional mazes not being included, but then it wouldn't be *Pac-Man*.



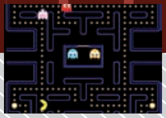




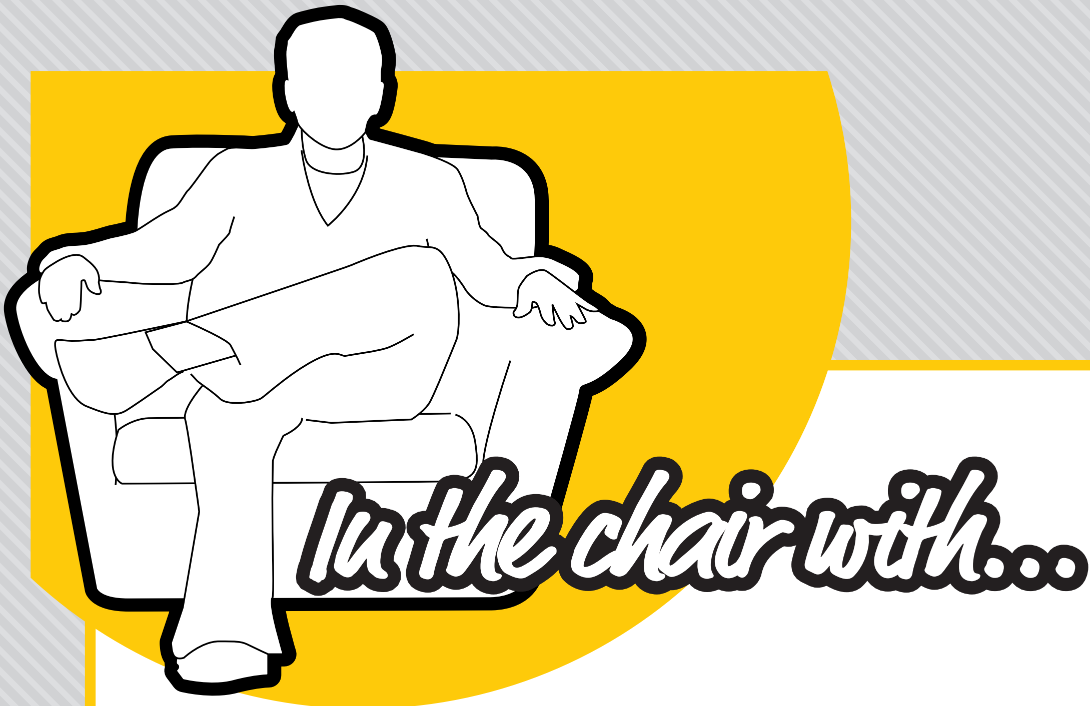
» Look, he's all scared. Now's your chance to quickly munch that ghost up before he recovers.



PAC-MAN WORLD RALLY
Year Released: **2007**
Featured Version: **PS2**



PAC-MAN
Year Released: **2008**
Featured Version: **Mobile**



JON HARE

Finding his programming partner Chris Yates through the binding powers of Alex Lifeson's stringed axe, Jon Hare and Chris Yates went on to create some of the most popular games ever. Stuart Hunt speaks with one of the most famous names in British football, the affable Jon Hare

JON HARE IS a name who should be instantly familiar with anyone keenly into their football or keenly into their Commodore computers. Jon started out as an artist for LT Software, working alongside school pal, programmer Chris Yates, and at the age of 19 the pair formed their own company, Sensible Software, and brought their unique brand of eccentricity to the games industry. Having already uncovered the development of many of Sensible Software's most seminal videogames we felt it was high time we tried to find out a little more about Jon, and the many highs and frustrating lows of Sensible Software

RETRO GAMER: So, Jon, tell me about the first time you met Chris Yates?
JON HARE: We were in the fifth year of school, and I went with a friend of mine called Paul Gibson to a Rush concert in the Hammersmith Odeon. We were living in Chelmsford at the time so we were getting the train in. Paul and I were getting the train back and Paul bumped into one of his mates called Richard Debonair. I remember Richard because he had red hair and when Chris and I began writing music together we made up a song called Debonair, which had a line about Richard's hair: "Debonair's got ginger hair" (laughs). So anyway, we're sat on this train and we started chatting to Richard, and it turns out he went with Chris Yates to the very same gig.

RG: So what happened?
JH: Well I got chatting to Chris and discovered that we were interested in the same kind of music and from that we started speaking to each other at school. I think we were in the same maths class, so we started sitting together and talking about music. We formed a band together pretty quickly after that, in about two weeks I think. We called ourselves Zeus.

RG: Zeus, that's a pretty epic sounding name.
JH: Yeah I guess it is (laughs).

RG: So who played what?
JH: Chris played the guitar a bit and I had an acoustic guitar which I got for Christmas one year. So I decided to be the bass player, Chris was on guitar – Alex Lifeson, I'm talking Rush here – and I would be Geddy Lee, singing and playing bass.

RG: And what kind of music did you play?
JH: We started playing our own things and some Rush and other stuff and that's really how we started working together actually. We were in a band from around the age of 15 to about 24, 25. We started Sensible up when we were both 19 so we'd been four years playing in a band together – so we had a great partnership before we'd even begun. We did our first gig in a Scout hut in a park near Chelmsford. It was terrible. You know the queen song *We Will Rock You*? It has a very simple drum beat but our drummer couldn't do it. We hired a drum kit for this gig and he'd never seen one before. He'd actually been practising on saucepans.

RG: So how well did your music go down?
JH: At one point we had hundreds of local school kids turn up to watch us. We actually got a bit of a local following going and it kind of set a trend for how we went into games. But then the drummer left us, leaving just me and Chris, and we had all these people wanting to come and see us, but we had no drummer.

DOWNLOAD THE PODCAST

Want the full lowdown on Jon's interview? Then head on over to **www.imagine-publishing.co.uk/podcasts.php**



JON HARE TIMELINE

Twister - Mother Of Charlotte 1986
Parallax 1986
Wizball 1987
Trivial Pursuit 1988
Microprose Pro Soccer 1988
Insects In Space 1989
Mega Lo Mania 1991
Wizkid: The Story Of Wizball II 1992
Sensible Soccer: European Champions: 92/93 Edition 1992
Sensible Soccer: European Champions 1992
Cannon Fodder 1993
Sensible Golf 1994
International Sensible Soccer 1994
Cannon Fodder 2 1994
Sensible World Of Soccer 1995
Sensible Soccer '98 1997
Sensible Soccer '98: European Club Edition 1998
Prince Naseem Boxing 2000
Sensible Soccer 2006 2006
Showtime Championship Boxing 2007

"Really the last two or three years at Sensible it was a different company from the previous ten"
Jon Hare

RG: And what did you do?
JH: We just totally went over the top. I turned up to the gig wearing this dressing gown and a grey horror mask and Chris put on a dress and a yellow mask and we walked on stage – totally not what people were expecting to see. And that pretty sums up how our software went.

RG: What was your relationship like with Chris?
JH: Between us, Chris and I could be incredibly leftfield, so there was always a lot of reining that in and trying to get some sensibility. If you look back at our products, we did stuff like *Wizball*, *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* or *3D Tennis*, which is a weird f*cking game, and more regular stuff like *Microprose Soccer*, *Sensible Soccer*, *Cannon Fodder* and *SEUCK*. We had this definite desire to express a lot of eccentricity but commercially we had to learn how to rein it in. And that's pretty much how our partnership worked. The best expression of us working together was *Wizkid*, that was the last game me and Chris really did work on together, just the two of us.

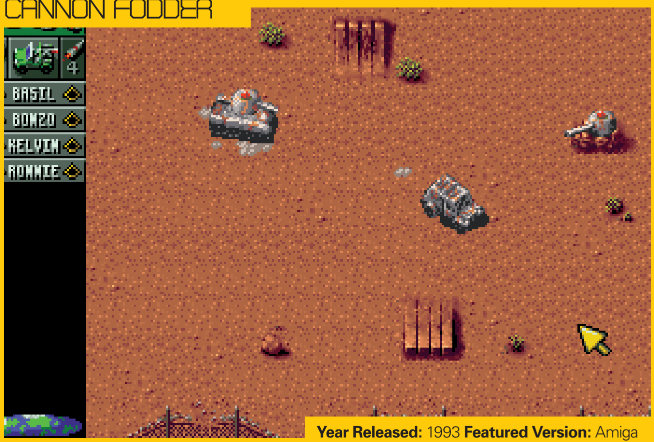
RG: So what happened when you both left school?
JH: I went to college to study art and theatre design and Chris was studying computing. Chris gave his course up after three months and I gave mine up after a year because I just wasn't interested. I wanted to be in a band. I'd just gotten a new girlfriend and really didn't care much about education. Both of us had done very well at O Levels and grew bored of education, so for a time I was just picking up small jobs here and there.

RG: So you didn't know what you wanted to do when you left school then?
JH: Not a bloody clue. I mean when you think about it, when I left school, which was back in 1982, there's no such thing as a computer games industry. It just wasn't established. We were just starting to get machines regularly in chip shops and small arcades. So by the time I left college in 1984, I spent about a year playing in the band and doing different jobs, I even worked in a lawnmower place, spray painting lawnmowers for while.

RG: How did you guys first get into game design?
JH: One day I went round Chris's house to play music. And I was round there a lot. He lived there with his brother and his dad. Chris's brother was actually a goalkeeper for Chelmsford City so his brother was out a lot of the

* FIVE TO PLAY

CANNON FODDER



Year Released: 1993 **Featured Version:** Amiga

WAR HAS NEVER has never been so funny. Cannon Fodder's mantra was a brilliant (if a somewhat improbable) melding of tongue-in-cheek warfare and subtle anti-war messages. The game drew a fantastic line between the classic run-'n-gun action games of past and real-time strategy games. Predating Westwood's vehicular heavy C&C by two years, Cannon Fodder can be considered a landmark Amiga title, which quickly amassed a cult following to match Sensible Soccer. Incidentally, both Fodder and Soccer would actually get the chance to meet on the playing field courtesy of a Christmas cover disc on the front of Amiga Format magazine, *Cannon Soccer*, which saw *Sensible Soccer* players facing off against the soldiers from *Cannon Fodder* in two snowy-themed levels.

Despite the success and popularity the game received from the press and public Cannon Fodder only spawned one sequel; a game which ramped up the difficulty a few notches and took the fight to the desert and even outer space.

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



Year Released: 1994 **Featured Version:** Amiga

"SENSIBLE SOCCER IS the only game I've worked on that I knew was brilliant," said an unabashed Jon Hare in our making of the game back in issue 43. Jon was right to be so confident; *Sensible Soccer*, and its player-manager sequel *Sensible World Of Soccer*, became instant hits on home computers thanks to their wonderfully accessible pick-up-and-play nature, genius one-button controls and timeless aesthetics. And with a brilliant spruced-up version of the game signed up by Microsoft and available for download on Xbox Live (which we awarded 92% and gave our converted Retro Sizzler stamp of brilliance), it looks like this beautiful game may never leave our screens.

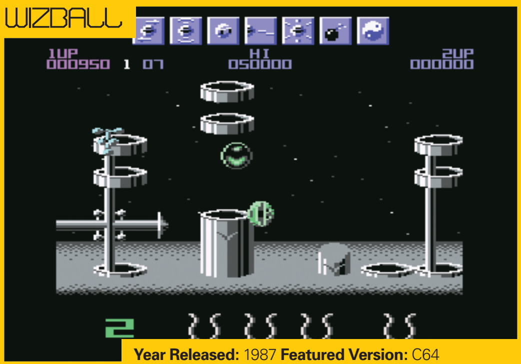
MEGA LO MANIA



Year Released: 1991 **Featured Version:** Mega Drive

AS JON REVEALS to us in his interview, the premise of *Mega Lo Mania* originally started out in the development stage as an intergalactic space race featuring a bevy of different futuristic weapons and space vehicles. But after seeing Peter Molyneux's *Populous*, the guys at Sensible Software made the decision to re-skin the videogame and make it much more celestial. Dropped were all traces of *Buck Rodgers*-isms – well, that is until players reached the last epoch (Mega Lo Mania), which featured laser pistols – and added were primordial men, contemporary vehicles, weapons, and a wonderful real-time strategy mechanic that was simple to grasp and brilliantly addictive.

WIZBALL



Year Released: 1987 **Featured Version:** C64

INSPIRED BY SIDE-SCROLLING shoot-'em-ups like *Salamander* and *Nemesis*, *Wizball* was Sensible's big breakout hit – a game that would set Jon and Chris on a path of success and make Sensible Software a company to watch. When an evil wizard saps all colour from the world of Wizworld, it falls to a wizard and his cat to bring colourу order back to the world, setting up one of the most original takes on the shoot-'em-up genre you'll ever see. If we had to level one criticism at *Wizball* it would be the erratic nature of its difficulty spikes. The rest of the game is solid, beautifully presented and demonstrates the very sensibilities that would make Sensible Software's games such a success.

PARALLAX



Year Released: 1986 **Featured Version:** C64

IF YOU NEED proof of Martin Galway's musical talents then boot up *Parallax*, flick the kettle on and listen to the game's flash screen intro – the entire song. We'd even go as far as to say that it's probably the single greatest piece of C64 music ever written – and the game's no slouch either. *Parallax* is a gorgeous looking top-down shooter that's exquisitely presented, wonderfully atmospheric and typically crank. The game's *2001: A Space Odyssey* style premise finds you plonked in the cockpit of a spaceship and trying to shut down a nefarious super computer called 'The Big One', by dog-fighting enemies, drugging or mugging scientists, extracting passwords and shutting down the many computer terminals filling its six arduous stages.

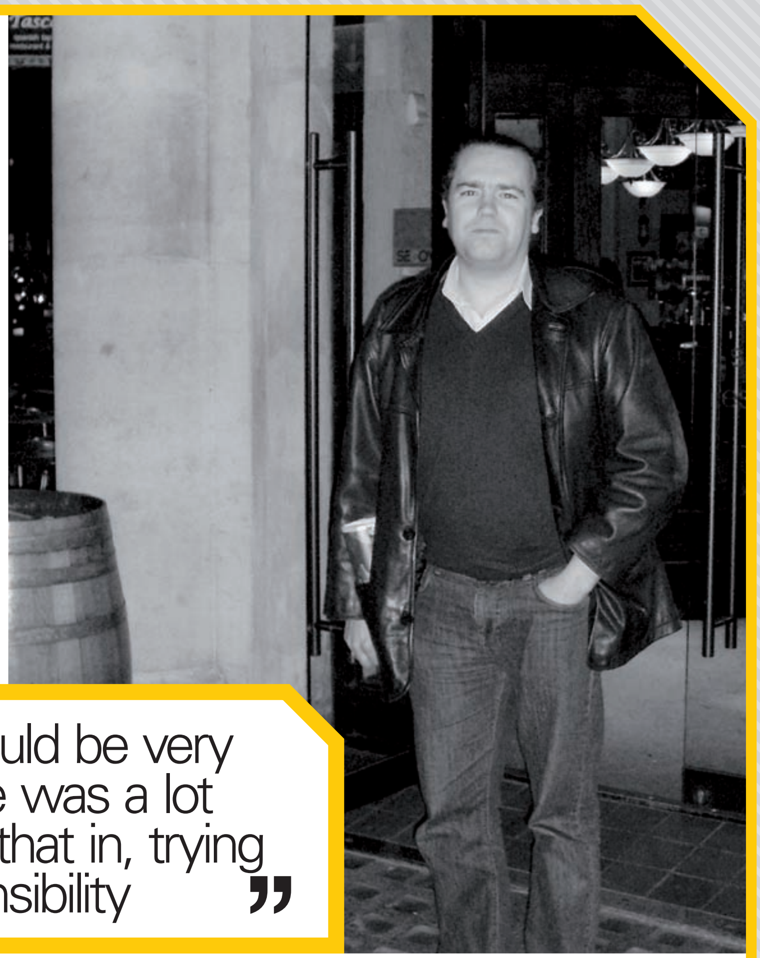
time and his dad worked in Saudi Arabia, so often we had the house to ourselves, which was great. There was a period of time where I was doing alternating shifts at Chris's house with his girlfriend. Chris's girlfriend would come round and when she left I would pop over and Chris and I would play music. Anyway, I went to Chris's one day and he was messing about with this funny little handheld computer. He'd written this stupid thing on it, I can't remember what it was, and then we wrote this nursery rhyme on it.

RG: Can you remember it?
JH: It went 'sing a song of six pence, a pocket full of rye, four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie. When the pie is opened the birds began to sing, get them with a Tommy gun and do the bastards in', something like that. Anyway, that was the first thing we ever did together on a computer. And then we made this game called *Escape From Sainsbury's*, which I think may have been written on this machine. The idea was you were walking down this supermarket and you had to go down the hardware isle and take things, it was all in text. And occasionally you got this message saying 'Mr Jesus of Naz your lights are on' (laughs). But it wasn't much, just an idea. It wasn't a finished product, just us taking the piss basically.

RG: So when did you both start to take game design more seriously?
JH: It started with Chris really. Chris wanted to teach himself programming more seriously. There were these catalogues, like Kays Catalogues, and there were about three or four companies doing this deal on computers at the time, and what Chris was doing was ordering his Spectrum on a one month sale or return basis and then when the month was up he'd send it back and take up another one. In three months he taught himself how to program on the Spectrum. And then he answered a job advert in the local paper for LT Software. They asked him to create some demo code and they liked his demo and gave him a job as a programmer on a Spectrum game called *Sodov The Sorcerer*, which was a conversion of a game called *Gandalf* – a BBC game I think. Well I go to Chris's house one day and he was programming *Sodov The Sorcerer* but he was struggling with the art. So I put the guitar down and started drawing little dragons on the Spectrum, I thought it was a bit of fun really. LT Software liked the art I had done and off the back of that offered me some work as well as Chris.

RG: What sort of things were you working on at LT Software?
JH: I worked on the game *Skyfox*, and worked on some early versions of *International Karate*, drawing bits of art for the backgrounds and bits of animation.

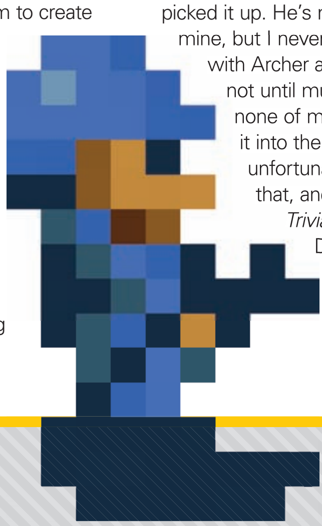
RG: So how did *International Karate* end up going to Archer?
JH: Well we were doing all the IK stuff to begin with, but the guy programming it was a real dope head, he was growing thousands of pot plants in his house. And shortly after he started he just f*cking disappeared (laughs).



> "Chris and I could be very leftfield, so there was a lot of trying reining that in, trying to get some sensibility"

RG: Are you sure he wasn't arrested?
JH: I don't know, I remember he had dark hair, not very long, kind of shoulder length, he was very Mediterranean looking. I presume he needed to do a runner.

RG: So what happened?
JH: Well everything we did for the game slipped, and that's when Archer picked it up. He's now a friend of mine, but I never had any contact with Archer at all at the time, not until much later on. And none of my graphics made it into the published game, unfortunately. So that was that, and then I worked on *Trivial Pursuit* for Oxford Digital Enterprises. I remember telling my mum I was going to Oxford to work on a game and her being very pleased; she thought I meant the university.



RG: So how did your parents feel about you working in the videogames industry then?
JH: My dad wasn't at all happy at first. He hated me leaving college. No, when I said I want to play in a band and tour around with Chris he didn't like that. But my nature is to do what I want anyway. No my dad wasn't happy with me.

RG: Obviously he must be proud of what you've achieved?
JH: It took until I was about 26, it was just about the time *Sensible Soccer* was coming out, or maybe it was shortly after the release of *Mega Lo Mania* for my dad to acknowledge the fact that I had made the right choice by leaving education when I did to pursue my independent and creative urges. It took about six years and about seven successful games. My dad is one of these people who take ages to win over. When I was a kid, if I ever wanted to do something I never told my dad, I just did it and told him afterwards. I learned to approach stuff in that way. At the end of the day I have a lot of love, care and respect for my parents, and I wouldn't do anything to upset them, but I didn't want them to stop me doing what I wanted to do.

RG: So what happened next?
JH: So then we started a game called *Twister* for System 3, which was a flying game with women with big boobs. Have you played it? I have, I actually booted it up the other day. It took me forever to get off the first level.

RG: Was it difficult?
JH: No, I was just playing through the first stage for ages, jumping from platforms shooting the Harlots, or Charlottes – whatever their names are.

RG: Yeah the bras got added right at the end? It was actually based on the arcade game *Discs Of Tron*.
JH: Now you mention it they do look very similar. To be honest a lot of the Sensible games on the Commodore 64 were based on arcade machines. Chris was very good at looking at arcade machines and extracting what they did well and then we would add a little twist in the design and art to add our own personality to it. *Twister* was based on *Discs Of Tron*, *Wizball* was inspired by *Nemesis* and *Salamander* and those games, *Microprose Soccer*

was based on *Tehkan World Cup*, and *Insects In Space* was our *Defender*-style game.

RG: Tell us about the time you pitched *Parallax* to Ocean?
JH: So we went up to Manchester to see Ocean. We went to see a guy called Colin Stokes and we showed him our demo of *Parallax*. And he took us down to see a guy called Jon Woods, who was the guy who ran Ocean at the time. They were the most powerful publisher in the country at that point, and we were just two 19-year-olds sitting there with the guy running the company saying, "I hear you've got some good stuff, here's a contract". Chris and I went home, smoked cigars and celebrated.

RG: What was Sensible Software's secret to success?
JH: I've always felt the way to make a commercial, successful original game – when the market isn't blighted by over licensing, which makes it impossible, and you can assume a level playing field – is you take one third of an established game, one third of another established game, one third original ideas, and mix it all together. If you go too leftfield, like Chris and I went with *International 3D Tennis*, people won't get it. It took me a while to really get that.

RG: Was there anything else?
JH: Well all our C64 games actually began with the control system. A lot of people forget those basics now. You should always get a control system down and then build a game around it because people want something they feel comfortable with, and make sure you have a good disciplined structure. *Wizball* is a good example, it looks very bizarre but it is very structured. You can do whatever the hell you want with the graphics or the text to make it appear bizarre and weird as long as there's a structure there to hold it all together. Interestingly, what I've learnt is, once you create more discipline in the foundation you've got the freedom to do whatever you want. But without that discipline core, it becomes an anarchic mess. We just had a good understanding of what we could and couldn't do creatively at Sensible.

RG: Can you talk us through those early days at Sensible Software?
JH: Up to and including all the Commodore 64 stuff, so this goes all the way up to *International 3D Tennis*, there were two of us: me and Chris. We used Martin Galway for all of our sound, virtually, and when he couldn't do it Chris would do stuff. Martin joined the company for about a year or two as a partner. Then when we took Dave Korn on to do the conversion of *International 3D Tennis*, which is our bridging game between the Commodore 64 and the Amiga. Dave was around for a while. A bloke called Chris Chapman was our lead programmer for *Mega Lo Mania* and *Sensible World Of Soccer*, and he was fantastic, I'm still in touch with him. I did all the art for all our games up until *Cannon Fodder*, apart from a guy called Jo Walker who did some art for the intro graphics of *Mega Lo Mania*. Then from about 1993 onwards Stoo Cambridge did nearly all of our 2D art.

RG: Sensible Software had a great working relationship with many of the computer magazines of its day, why was that?
JH: Well we forged our reputation by how we were with journalists. And because we were a developer and trying to promote ourselves – which a handful of developers did in those days – we would deliberately try and work directly with the magazines. Now when you work with publishers, as magazines, you get a totally different, much more controlled, mentality in regard to how games are promoted. Whereas we understood that the people reviewing games were like us, we also understood that the people buying the games were like us, too. Basically we adopted the philosophy that everyone's more or less the same at heart and therefore treated everyone like friends and equals, and hoped they liked our games enough to write favourably about them.

RG: How did the team change going into the Amiga era?
JH: We had a really nice team. We had Jools [Jameson], Chris Chapman doing the programming, and Chris managing them as well as doing his own code. Dave Korn would pop in sometimes, me and Stoo doing the art. Me leading the design, although everyone was designing bits, Richard Joseph doing our sound, which he did for all the Amiga stuff, and a guy called Mike Hammond who was doing all of our football data. And that was pretty much our team; we had five or six in house, two or three guys out of house and that was it.

> "Chris was programming Sodov The Sorcerer but he was struggling with the art. I started drawing little dragons on the Spectrum, I thought it was a bit of fun really"

RG: How did you and Chris manage the team?
JH: Well because we were ramping things up I needed to focus more on the management stuff and game design. And when the technology made the next leap Chris focused more on the management of technology. Actually even on the Amiga Chris had to focus more on holding together the technical side of the company… and I focused more on managing the design for games like *Cannon Fodder* and *Sensible Soccer*.

RG: You say ramping up, in what way?



*NUMBER CRUNCHING

Jon was **19** years old when he set up Sensible Software

Twister – Mother Of Charlotte was Jon's first published game, released in **1986**

Parallax featured **6** stages

Jon left school in **1981**

Sensible Soccer (93/93 edition) scored an impressive **94%** in *Amiga Power*

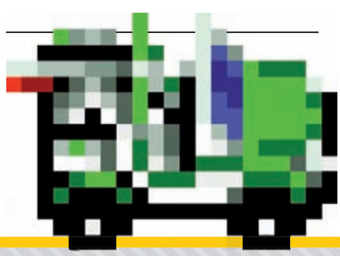
Galax-I-Birds was written in just **10** days

The genus for *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* began in **1984**. It was originally called *Drugged-Out Hippy*

Codemasters bought out Sensible Software in **1999**

Jon paid the British Legion **£500** to stop them kicking up a stink about the use the poppies in *Cannon Fodder*

The band Rush formed in **1968**



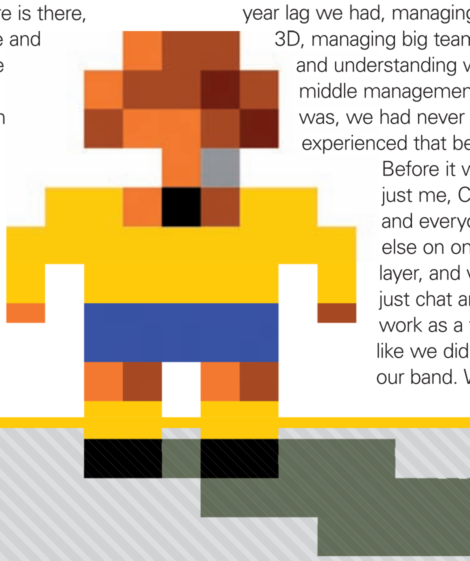


» **[Mega Drive] England Vs Germany. Prepare to relive one of sport's longest running rivalries. Just ignore the out of date strips…**

JH: Well obviously technology was moving forward and we couldn't stay as a six man team any more. This was frustrating for us because we had virtually perfected our business model working with this small, tight development team. We'd get people in, we'd pay them well, and we'd cut them in on the royalties. We were good at what we were doing and everyone who worked for us was good. But then the company had to get bigger to cope with the new formats.

RG: So what happened?

JH: We signed a three game deal with Warner and did *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll*, which is a game we had rolling around since we did that Sainsbury's game I was telling you about. We had this idea to do a game about a drugged-out hippy. What upsets me most about *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* is that the game engine idea is brilliant. The structure is there, the elements are there and I would love to use the concept of the engine someday. The problem was we went into 3D programming too late. We didn't even look at it until 1994-95, and most people had been doing 3D for two years. And during that time, while people had been doing 3D we'd been making loads of money in Europe on the Amiga, ST and Mega Drive. What made us leave was being offered four times more money to do 3D games on the PC rather than 2D games on the Amiga. We knew we were at the top of the tree in terms of 2D games development, but really we had fallen too far behind in terms of the technology. We didn't know how to manage big teams, we didn't know the nightmare that 3D programming raised technically and we felt like we no longer had absolute control over the hardware environment. When we moved onto the 3D we had a bigger team, longer development times, and didn't have the ability to perfect and bring genius out from the machines. It's like being an artist making your living using oil paints and then someone says to you, "I want you to do sculpture"; it takes a while to adjust. You know you can do it, but that two year lag we had, managing 3D, managing big teams and understanding what middle management was, we had never experienced that before. Before it was just me, Chris and everyone else on one layer, and we'd just chat and work as a team like we did in our band. We weren't corporate people, of course we wanted to be successful and make money, and we did, but not as a corporation. We were just creative people doing good deals, getting good royalties and making good product, and then the whole landscape changed, the nature of the publishers changed and the nature of the consumer changed.



RG: Speaking of changes, how well do you feel *SWOS* stands up today?

JH: It's weird because *Sensible World Of Soccer* is a real comprehensive football game; you play, you manage and you can be a player/coach. I still believe that *Sensible World Of Soccer* on the Amiga is the best player/management game there is. Obviously the management's not as in-depth when compared to *Championship Manager* or *Football Manager*, it's kind of 50 per cent of what they are, but then we deliberately made it fairly light.

RG: So when Sensible Software started to grow how did it change?

JH: Well in the last three years of the company we got a big contract – a lot of money up front to do 3D games. We struggled for at least a year on it, and by the time we got a handle on it, it was too late. Really the last two or three years at Sensible it was a different company from the previous ten. We grew to about 23 people at our peak. *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* demanded a lot of art, so we needed a lot of artists, and we also

needed more programmers, and it wasn't so enjoyable running a company that size to be honest.

RG: Why do you think that was?
JH: The sensibility that Chris and I had as a management team worked well in a smaller team rather than in bigger teams where you have to spend a lot of time co-ordinating people to work with each other. You always get two or three people in that sized team who are trying to hide the fact that they're no bloody good. Unfortunately we had a few bad programmers, and in having four great programmers in Chris, Chris Chapman, Jools Jameson and Dave Korn, we just hadn't encountered that before. We had grown used to being very lucky with programming staff, but we soon realised what it was like to live without this luxury. Also, we took too much advice, technically, from these programmers who were in no position to give it. But they never told us at the time that they didn't know what they were doing, they would keep quiet and get found out six months later, and by then it's five months too late, so that's kind of of why things changed technically for the worse.

RG: How did the name Sensible Software come about?
JH: I don't really remember to be honest, what I remember most is the design of the image of the logo. We had a big 'S' with 'ensibl' and a big 'E' at the end and then 'oftwar' written underneath it, so it was on two layers, and I think that logo kind of sealed it for me. We actually did a combination of using very sci-fi looking text and very arty text, and the whole idea was this merging of art and science. Also, the name may in some small way have also been something to do with Captain Sensible entering the discussion… but I am really not sure.

RG: So there weren't any other names that were considered then?
JH: No, the band changed its name every f*cking five minutes, but the company was always Sensible Software.

RG: How far exactly did *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* get into its production?
JH: The original idea came about in 1985 when it was called *Drugged-Out Hippy*. The original story was about this guy who's on the dole, is the lead singer of this band, and he has several different drug habits. After borrowing two grand from some Hell's Angels to buy a van and drive his band around, he has two weeks to pay them back before they beat the sh*t out of him. That was the story.

RG: And that's how you pitched it to Warner?
JH: Well actually by the time we were brave, or stupid, enough to suggest *Drugged-Out Hippy* to Warner we'd changed it to *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* by then.

RG: So this was the first idea you pitched to Warner?
JH: They wanted to sign us up because they wanted the next *Sensible Soccer*, and we had a three game deal with them so we picked two old ideas we had. The first was *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll*, another was a game we had called *Have A Nice Day*, but it was originally going to be called *Office Chair Massacre*.

> "We were just creative people doing good deals… and making good product, and then the whole landscape changed, the nature of the publishers changed and the nature of the consumer changed"

RG: Sound's interesting what was the premise?
JH: That game was going to be set in offices, with office chairs with wheels and guns lodged in the arms. And you'd fire at people and blast backwards. It was kind of like *Asteroids*. We came up with this entire story about company growth and sh*t to base around it but that was basically a joke. Because they wanted *Sensible Soccer* [Warner] signed up for *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* and *Have A Nice Day*.

RG: So what exactly happened with the game?
JH: Well it was going okay, until they sold to GT Interactive. GT didn't like *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* so it died a death. I finished a 1,500 word manual description for the game, which was 95 per cent complete, the art was 75 per cent complete, the sound was virtually 66 per cent complete, but the programming… we were so far behind we couldn't really display it properly. GT just turned around one day and said we just don't want to do *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* any more, not for technical reasons just because they didn't want to do a naughty game. So they dropped out, and then we had to scrap *Have A Nice Day*.

RG: And what platforms would they've been released on?
JH: *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* would have been for the PC; *Have a Nice Day* was planned for the PlayStation.

RG: Do you think you could have ironed out the technical problems you were experiencing with it?
JH: We could have surmounted the technical problems if there had been sufficient publisher support. I'm not blaming them for it because why should they support us, we f*cked up. Another big problem that Sensible had was we never had a game remade in the States. Take *Sensible Soccer*, a football game: at that time you can't sell them in the States. We didn't tap America or Japan.

RG: Not even with *Cannon Fodder*?
JH: Virgin had *Command & Conquer* in development for some time, which was produced by an American developer called Westwood, and for some reason they pushed that game much more than ours, even though ours came out first. The one game I'm very bitter about is *C&C*, as it really got preference over *Cannon Fodder* within the same publisher. I think it was to do with Virgin US wanting to dominate Virgin Europe.

RG: Weren't you ever worried that you weren't making a name for yourself across the pond?
JH: Not really because when we were at Sensible we never researched the market, we just did whatever the f*ck we wanted. We kind of had the mentality of an artist. I did stuff because I wanted to do it. Why should you overly concern yourself with what other people are doing? I remember when did *Wizball* we saw this game being advertised called *Bounder*, and we thought, "Sh*t someone's making a game exactly like *Wizball*". Of course the game came out and it was nothing like it.

RG: Did you ever consider selling Sensible Software at that point you took the leap into 3D?
JH: We should've done, but we didn't. We had been making good money and making games for a long time, and seeing some really good money from royalties. And then someone offered us a deal for £3 million to make three games. We wanted to do our *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* game since we were kids, so we just went for it. And at that point, if we were just business heads, we would have tried to sell the company at that point. But all we could see was huge profit, in terms of finance, and in terms of creativity it would've been like being back at school. We were just having a laugh and making some money, and that was our vision for it. We hadn't put a foot wrong for about seven years so we kind of thought we were walking on water, but eventually we weren't (laughs).

RG: So what do you think of the current state of the industry?
JH: Basically I know a really good product will nearly always sell well as long as it gets first into the minds and then into the hands of gamers. The problem is that marketing speaks so loudly it distorts the marketplace. It's like a wise man talking to you in the corner with loads of people shouting sh*t in his face, and it's hard to hear what he's saying. If the person shouting happens to be shouting something good, that's great, if not then he doesn't really care because you're only aware of the message from the man shouting the loudest.

RG: Can you let us in on a secret about one of your games?
JH: For the first year of its life *Mega Lo Mania* was set in space, it was a space race, and you could fly a ship around shooting things. It was only in the last six months that we decided to change the setting. And the inspiration for that was *Populous*; when we saw the cavemen that gave us the idea to humanise it. Thankfully it turned out to be the right decision.

[Atari ST] To evoke a sense of loss when a man was killed, *Cannon Fodder* paid tribute via its pre-mission screen.





[Mega Drive] Mega lo Mania never gets the kudos it deserves. A shame really as it's a cracking god sim.



[Amiga] *Cannon Soccer* the greatest Christmas freebie since *Monty Christmas.*

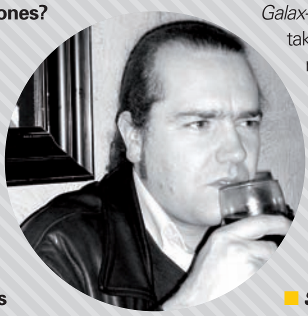
YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

After creating so many great games over the years it was inevitable that our readers would have their own probing questions for Jon. Here are just a few of them…

Do you miss the Amiga/C64 days?
Those early Amiga/C64 days, I miss it every day. I would have been very happy if they had never ended.

Is there a chance *Sex 'N' Drugs 'N' Rock 'N' Roll* will see the light of day?
If someone said they would buy the rights from me, and revive it in a modern way, I would be interested. Given the availability of my time, I would do anything that was creatively fulfilling.

Are there any plans to make a version of *Microprose Pro Soccer* for mobile phones?
No, the word 'Microprose' is something I've not heard in a long time, mostly all I hear rumours about is *Sensible Soccer.*



How do you feel about the fact that nobody in games development seem to have latched onto the whole 'anti-war wargame' nature of *Cannon Fodder* and produced something with the same ethos?
British people tend to view war as evil but necessary to prevent greater problems and I believe this understanding is represented in *Cannon Fodder.* In the US these sensibilities do not seem to be emphasised [in game design] as heavily.

What was you favourite system to program for and why?
The Amiga. Why? It was a free platform. Nowadays Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft have to approve everything, but with the Amiga you were free to do whatever. It was also a big jump technically from the previous platform, and the graphics management was embedded, allowing for games with a greater emphasis on gameplay, rather than graphical management systems.

How well commercially did *International 3D Tennis* do?
It was the least successful of all the full priced games Sensible made. I believe the presentation of the game was too avant-garde. It was the crazy Seventies Czech cartoon look more than anything that put people off.

How did you come up with the inspiration behind the *Galax-I-Birds* and the attack waves (in particular the later ones) and was *Uridibad* ever planned to go any further than its Compunet demo form?
Galax-I-Birds was simply a piss take of *Galaxians* and it was made in less than ten days. Not much thought was given to any of the content to be honest. *Uridibad* was originally planned to go further but other games superseded it.

***Sensible Soccer* aside, what is you favourite footy game over the last 20+ years?**
Pro Evolution Soccer, but I am about to play the new *FIFA* game; I went to Vancouver to see EA recently and they gave me copy of the game. But *FIFA* on the Mega Drive is one of my worst games ever; I particularly dislike it because it stopped *Sensible Soccer* from being as big a success as it could have been on consoles.

Will we ever see *Cannon Fodder 3*?
I started developing *Cannon Fodder 3* ten years ago. I was commissioned to work on it when Codemasters bought Sensible Software. I believed in the design of the game, and the progress we made on the game was of very high quality, but development stopped in 2001.



What, for you, is the best game you have had a hand in developing?
I would have to say *Sensible World Of Soccer.*

BLACK TIGER

PUT A TIGER IN YOUR GAMING TANK



- **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- **RELEASED:** 1987
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £90 (PCB BOARD)



HISTORY

For all the recent gushing over the latest 3D reworking of the *Prince Of Persia* franchise, there is still something satisfying about going back to basics and hacking and slashing your way through scrolling, bonus-packed 2D levels.

While contemporary games like the new *POP* are undoubtedly gripping in their narrative and amazing in their beauty, they can overlook the need to frustrate and challenge the player. It is precisely why revisiting the medieval setting of *Black Tiger* has been like a breath of fresh air; those moments of youth spent in the dank arcades with a bagful of ten-pence pieces and a host of ace platformers being not-so-mustily relived.

Relatively unknown and yet brushed off and re-released on one of those Capcom PSP retro collections, *Black Tiger* was the spiritual successor to *Ghosts 'N Goblins*. And you died in it. Unlike some of today's games, death was a reality. You hopped around the eight-way levels seeking encouragement, reward and more than a few bad guys to kill, while avoiding being slayed yourself.

Collecting coins would enable you to purchase better weapons and armour, and get you keys for the treasure chests. There was a solid emphasis on exploration too, smashing at walls to reveal hidden goodies. All the while your head would spin as much as some of the animation and your brain would move as fast as the main character's little legs.

Yeah, it was repetitive. Yeah, the bosses could be annoying (please don't change the direction of the controls, Mr Bad Dude). Yeah, the sound could grate. And of course, amid all of this action, there wasn't much of a story – but it didn't suffer from it. The plot was something to do with dragons and the need to kill them to save the world, the universe and possibly populations beyond.

At the end of the day, the need to progress, to get to the next stage, is all encompassing, and the simplicity of having a guy with a whip-style weapon, a few daggers and some effective armour worked a treat. Simply wonderful.




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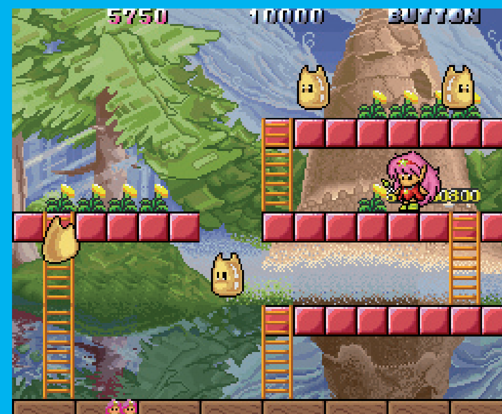
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WHY YOU MUST PLAY…

ROD-LAND



[Arcade] Rit is an impossibly cute fairy on a mission. Just don't get in her way okay?



[Arcade] *Rod-Land* may look impossibly cute but don't be fooled. A rock hard game exists beneath the cheery exterior.



Flying kicks are a great way of taking down motorbikes and keeping your distance.

FROM A LOFTY TOWER FILLED WITH THE CUTEST CRITTERS IN GAMING, MIKE BEVAN EXAMINES WHY THIS FAIRY STORY REMAINS ONE OF THE BEST ARCADE CONVERSIONS OF THE NINETIES



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** JALECO
- » **DEVELOPER:** JALECO
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £70+

We imagine the design meeting for Jaleco's *Rod-Land* might have gone something like this… "So we'll have these two fairies with really big hair. Carrying invisible ladders around with them. And they'll be some baddies that look like wobbly potatoes. We'll call them Spuds. Plus some bunny rabbits, sharks, bumble-bees and squirrels and stuff. It'll be cute."

"Right, so how do these pixie gals despatch the meanies? Lightning bolts, fireballs, rocks dropped on their heads?"

"Nope, we'll give them magic rods."

On paper it sounds sickeningly twee, but *Rod-Land* is actually really great. Dismissed by some as little more than a *Bubble Bobble* clone, it has more in common with the bash-the-baddie antics of *Parasol Stars* or the rather jolly (though little-remembered) classic-era arcade game *Mr Do's Castle*. Presented in cheerful 'platform-and-ladder-vision' ™, *Rod-Land* is an unpretentiously old-school arcade game with bags of playability and charm. Thanks to Storm – the talented bunch behind *SWIV*, and the home versions of *Silkworm* – it avoided relative arcade obscurity by hitting most of the key platforms of the day.

Tam and Rit, Rod-Land's garishly coiffured fairy folk, wake up one morning to find their 'mom' has been kidnapped by a nasty demon, and taken to the top of the Maboots Tower. Equipped with the aforementioned rods of maximum hurt, they formulate a rescue plan involving flower-picking and 40 rounds of terminally cute monsters. The twin heroines proceed to dash around the single-screen levels, hoovering up blooming bonuses, *Pac-Man*-style, while purging the various furry fuzz-wits by walloping them about the scenery.

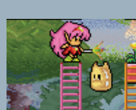
It's an odd but strangely satisfying method of attack. Jamming your rod into a monster's side (steady…) stuns it briefly, while continuing to bash the joystick button throws it repeatedly back and forth over your ahead. If there's a platform underneath it'll be smacked painfully to death, leaving a bonus item in its wake. Otherwise this method can be used to stop enemies in their tracks for a split-second, bash other baddies, flip them out of your path, or (in the home versions) dump them off platforms out of harm's way.

The various items left behind in cute baddies' death-throes cue further welcome destruction, from rockets and bouncing projectiles to exploding dynamite and

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE



THAT ROD
Deceptively innocuous to look at, this powerful device turns your cute avatar into a deadly killing machine. Use with care.



MAKE YOUR OWN LEVEL
Well not exactly, but the ability to create ladders on the fly certainly makes your life a lot easier when you're zipping around each stage.



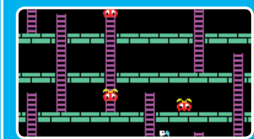
PINBALL MADNESS
Play Super Breakout with your furry friends by sending these lethal power-balls bouncing all over the shop. It's like pinball, with squirrels.



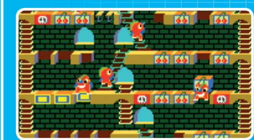
DEATH BY LIGHTER
Leave your enemies crunchy on the outside and toasty in the middle with this portable flamethrower. Rarely seen, but much fun to use.

INFLUENCES

The games that influenced and have been influenced by **Rodland**



■ **SPACE PANIC** [1980] ARCADE
Battle pesky space monsters and a dwindling oxygen supply with nothing but a measly shovel in the forerunner to Universal's classic *Mr Do!* series.

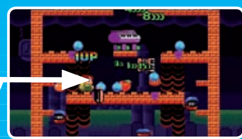


■ **MR DO'S CASTLE** [1983] ARCADE
A colourful update of *Space Panic* that features Universal's heroic harlequin, Mr Do.



■ **DON DOKO DON** [1989] ARCADE
The beardy mallet-obsessed gnomes of this fun Taito platformer offer a diverting antidote to *Rodland*'s fairy girlishness.





■ **PARASOL STARS** [1991] PC ENGINE
Another cute looking game although this time you have a handy parasol at your disposal.



■ **TUMBLEPOP** [1993] ARCADE
Realising that it couldn't use a magical rod for its cutesy platformer, Data East instead settled for a hoover. The gamble amazingly paid off.



■ **NIGHTMARE IN THE DARK** [1995] NEO GEO MVS
A fun take on both *Rod-Land* and *Snow Bros*, albeit one with a distinctly gothic feel.

"An unpretentiously old-school arcade game with bags of charm"

WHY YOU SHOULD TRACK DOWN ROD-LAND

bombs. These are great for taking out multiple meanies in one fell swoop. Which is useful, because left too long, the cutie-pie denizens of each level become increasingly angry and prone to charge you down, and that's not good.

Helpfully, grabbing all the on-screen flowers in a level initiates a *Mr Do*-style 'Extra' game, where any remaining critters transform into 'bonus monsters'. This doesn't actually improve your situation, survival-wise, but should you kill them and collect all the letters to spell the word 'extra' you'll clear the round and gain an additional life. You'll find this particularly handy for some versions, notably the Amiga, ST, and Spectrum, which only provide one credit to complete the game.

The final string to your tutu is an endless supply of magical ladders, which can be used to create useful shortcuts between platforms, reach otherwise inaccessible flora, or sidestep the bad guys. While the arcade game assigned a separate button for ladder usage, the home ports use a one-button system in tandem with pushing the joystick up or down, which feels more intuitive during play. In fact, for a platform game with no 'jump' button, the control system is nigh-on perfect. You'll ponder the advantages of killing your enemies outright against stunning them for 'Extra' bonuses later, and discover countless ways of using your ladders to build your route through to the end of each round.

Every tenth level sees the appearance of a boss stage, whose inhabitants display similarly cuddlesome qualities to the bunnies and boomerang-chucking starfish elsewhere in the game. Happily, boffing them with your rod makes them go all squiffy-eyed and sends you onto the next block of stages fairly painlessly.

For the home conversions, Storm implemented a number of improvements over the original arcade game. The play mechanics were tweaked, allowing more time for the 'Extra' game, and making it harder to finish off baddies (the arcade version lets you to kill them by smacking them against thin air). The excellent and very faithful Amiga and Atari ST versions were overhauled with improved presentation and superior animation and music. Simply put, *Rod-Land* is a timeless two-player arcade game, lovingly ported by a bunch of folk who obviously cared about getting it right, and it shows.

THE CONVERSIONS

How the various versions compare



1 AMIGA/ATARI ST

BEST VERSION

These two ports are nigh-on identical, so we've lumped them together. By far the closest to the arcade game, both visually and aurally, they're the definite high-point of Storm's conversions, and play like a proverbial dream. Pure class.



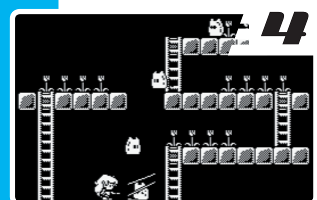
2 COMMODORE 64

Steve Snake's excellent C64 port is one of the finest coin-up conversions on the machine, right up there with *Bubble Bobble*. Retaining the original's playability, the sprites and animation are remarkably true to their arcade counterparts. A truly impressive port.



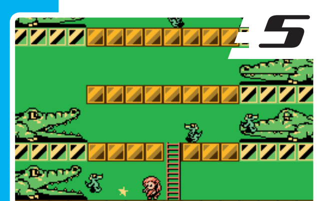
3 GAME BOY

The GB version is surprisingly good and, amazingly, is actually very close in feel to the 16-bit versions. For clarity, each level has been blown up to about four times the size of the Game Boy's screen, scrolling as you move around, allowing for larger character sprites.



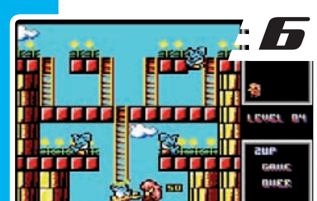
4 ZX SPECTRUM

While the CPC version has all the speed of an anaemic snail, the Speccy 128 release moves at a pace that can sometimes feel a little too quick. Still, it's a great conversion, and the monochrome visuals replicate the charm of the arcade game well. A very solid effort.



5 NES

Ported by Simon Pick, of *Daredevil Dennis* fame, this outing is another very playable conversion. Enemy behaviour has been tweaked slightly and the bees now shoot lightning bolts at our unfortunate heroines. The groovy soundtrack, by 'Spicko' himself, is also worthy of mention.

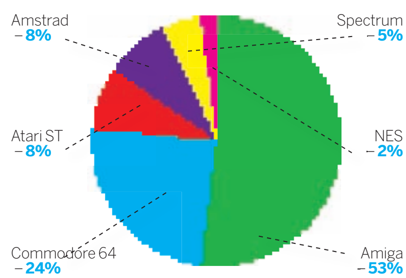


6 AMSTRAD CPC

WORST VERSION

Unfortunately, the Amstrad conversion suffers from an unmistakeable sense of sluggishness compared with its 8-bit peers. Although the graphics retain the vibrant colour and charm of the arcade, they suffer from a noticeable lack of definition. Bah.

FORUM OPINION



"The Amiga version by a universe mile. Best graphics, best gameplay, was fast and 'quite simply brilliant' ((c) david darling)" **– JetSetWilly**

"I was very impressed with the ZX Spectrum conversion. Although there is a lack of colour in the game, the sprites are very well done" **– yethboth**

You've got the touch

WITH APPLE'S iPHONE MAKING HUGE WAVES AROUND THE WORLD, **DARRAN JONES** LOOKS AT HOW IT'S BECOMING THE PLATFORM FOR CLASSIC VIDEOGAMES AND BEDROOM CODERS



Apple's iPhone is big news. Since its UK launch in November 2007 it's constantly been in the public's consciousness thanks to an aggressive marketing campaign by Apple, the popularity and success of the original iPod and the fact that it's an incredibly swanky and desirable piece of kit.

"So why on Earth are you covering it in Retro Gamer?" We hear you ask. Simple really, it's quickly becoming the platform of choice both for bedroom coders and smaller developments studios, as well as the bigger publishers. Companies like Gameloft, Namco Bandai and Electronic Arts have already started to release some cracking retro and retro-inspired games on the system.

Anyone who's played Peter Hirschberg's cracking – yet unofficial – port of *Adventure* or Namco's faithful adaptation of *Pac-Man* with its choice of varied, yet intuitive, controls will instantly be able to tell you how well the system is suited to these classic games. While some admittedly work better than others, the device is nevertheless becoming extremely popular with mainstream publishers and homebrew coders.

"Apple just has a really good system setup that makes it easy for independent developers to get their work in front of millions of people," revealed Hirschberg when we asked him about the appeal of working on the iPhone over similar systems that offer downloadable digital content. "The other systems [PSN, Xbox Live Arcade and WiiWare] are more geared towards large game corporations and just don't interest me." It's a sentiment that was shared by classic Eighties coder Jon Ritman back in issue 60 and also *Last Day At Work*'s Arthur K Humphrey whose debut iPhone release *Fish Tycoon* – a rather excellent sim-management game – is currently riding high in the iTunes chart.

"For me it's more about distribution rather than hardware," begins Humphrey. "Many other formats currently have protracted approval and certification processes, and enforce a lot of UI and usage standards. It's nice that Apple is relatively hands-off in this way and lets developers work out their own 'best practices'. Additionally, we aren't always sure that decision-makers at these downloadable-content providers will actually 'get' our games. In open-development distribution models like iTunes, we have always been able to rely on the end consumer to fully support what we do, and push us up the charts."



» *Metal Gear* for the iPhone caused a massive furore on the internet, when expectant Xbox owners thought Konami's announcement would be about a 360 version of *Metal Gear Solid 4*.

It's this ease of use, lack of needing a big name or studio behind you, flexible price setting and the generous cuts that developers receive from their sales, which has seen hundreds of would-be coders heading to the machine in order to show off their projects to a more than receptive audience. As the popularity of the system grows, the bigger studios have also begun to shown an interest in the new platform. While it's safe to say that studios like Sega and Atari are doing little more than dabbling at the moment – Sega has released a fairly enjoyable update of *Super Monkey Ball*, while Atari's sole release is its wonderfully addictive remake of *Missile Command* – it's the companies with more prominent mobile divisions – Gameloft, Electronic Arts and Namco Bandai – that are currently making the biggest impact on the system.

Namco Bandai in particular is leading the charge with some truly excellent ports or variations of some of its back-catalogue titles. *Pac-Man*, *Ms Pac-Man* and *Pole Position Remixed* are all worth owning if you've ever enjoyed the original games, while the excellent *Star Trigon*, featuring the lovable lead from *Mr Driller*, and the fun but flawed *i Love Katamari* proves that the studio is just as dedicated to pushing newer and original IP as well.

Electronic Arts is also seeing the benefit of the iPhone and has already released Will Wright's *Spore* and *Sim City*, along with *Tetris*, and more traditional games like Monopoly and Yahtzee, with the promise of yet more games on the way.

"There are a number of factors that have contributed to iPhone's success, but we see it coming down to three things: powerful device, accessible distribution system, and an enormous selection of great apps," explains EA Mobile's director of marketing Peter Gunn. "The iPhone, with its bright multi-touch screen, accelerometer, Wi-Fi, GPS, among other features, is a sizable technical and value innovation. We can create games that range in complexity, from the more casual titles like *Tetris* and *Sudoku*, to the more advanced like *Spore Origins* and *Need For Speed Undercover*. The distribution system on-device offers the user a functional experience that makes it easy to purchase, and, obviously, there is huge breadth of choice."

Another big-name publisher that's made its mark on the iPhone is French developer Gameloft who has released everything from the graphically spectacular *Asphalt 4: Elite Racing* and *Hero Of Spartan* to *Guitar Hero* variants like *Guitar Rock Tour*, to pastiches on classic retro games like *Arkanoid* and *Bust-A-Move* (*Block Breaker Deluxe 2* and *Bubble Bash* respectively). All three companies are swiftly carving a niche into the new market, but with the likes of Konami (*Frogger*) THQ Wireless (*De Blob* and *Pass The Pigs*) Sega and Atari all snapping at their heels, they're going to have to do everything they can to stay ahead of their competitors.

Of course, it would be cynical to suggest that publishers will simply head anywhere in order to chase the almighty dollar (or pound in this case), but considering the amounts of revenue that can be potentially made from the service, it's hardly surprising that so many people and developers are flooding the system with games. *Trism* creator Steve Demeter made over $250,000 dollars in the first two months of his puzzle game's release. When you consider he was selling it for just $5 a pop, that's a hell of a lot of downloads for such a small period of time. Even so, despite Demeter's success he's not too sure how



Q&A

Barry O'Neill

Namco Bandai's UK president on revitalising old classics

RG: Why have you decided to release your classic coin-ops on the iPhone?
BO: At Namco, we are dedicated to providing great entertainment to our customers, whenever and wherever they are. This means providing them with fun, quality, innovative games that they can access from any mobile device.

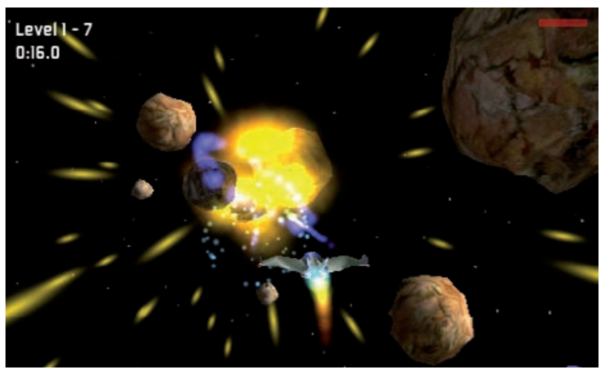
RG: How do you decide which games you will end up converting?
BO: It's really a balance between gameplay and device functions. We evaluate each game, and consider the best possible implementation for each device. We want to make sure the game makes the best use of the interface on each device, while remaining true to the original brand.

RG: Do you have any other classic titles planned for the future?
BO: Absolutely. We currently have many games in the works, so you will have to keep an eye on the App Store to see what is coming next. For example, we just launched Time Crisis Strike - it is a great implementation of the classic Time Crisis duck-and-shoot gameplay.

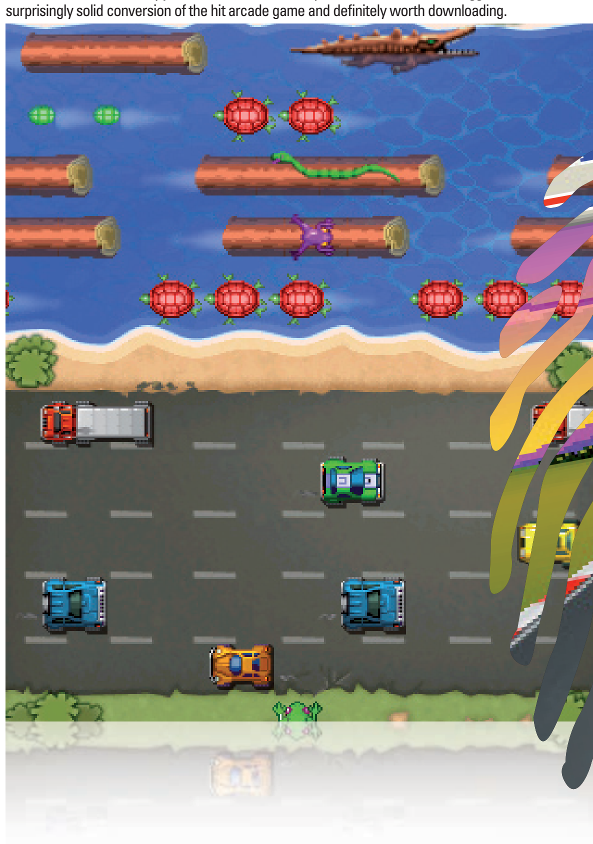
RG: Why did you decide to remake *Pole Position* instead of a more recent racer like *Ridge Racer*?
BO: Namco has a long history of leading its new platform development with updated versions of the classics, adapting the gameplay to be appropriate for the platform, while still keeping true to the original. Pole Position has a long history and is well established with the mass market casual gaming audience. We thought it would be an interesting challenge to figure out how to update this classic game for a platform that relies on accelerometers and touch-driven interfaces, while still keeping it recognisably Pole Position.

RG: Do you feel these games gain anything from being on the machine?
BO: The iPhone and other enhanced devices provide an opportunity for a new generation of games to experience PAC-MAN, Katamari and other great games on a mobile device. The iPhone's large screen, excellent performance and unique touch interface make it a great gaming device. In fact, the iPhone screen is higher resolution than some of the old- school arcade machines like PAC-MAN.

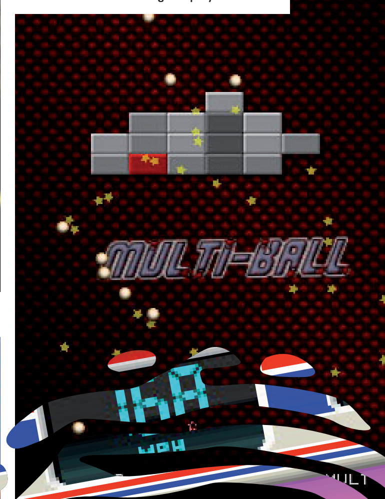
RG: What do you think about the clones appearing on the iPhone?
BO: Our concern is in giving the user the very best experience. There is a high likelihood that 'knock-off' games will provide a complete user experience true to the original title that provided the "inspiration". The game mechanics, art, sound, etc. maybe of a lower quality, which can lead to a poor user experience. If a consumer's first experience with a game is a poor one, they are unlikely to give another similar game a chance.



» (Below) Konami has only just started to make an impact on the iPhone, but *Frogger* is a surprisingly solid conversion of the hit arcade game and definitely worth downloading.



» Gareth Noyce's *BallZup* may lack the polish of other *Arkanoid* clones, but its ingenious multiplier approach makes a huge amount of difference to the overall gameplay.



You've got the touch



long this particular gravy train will continue for, as he recently revealed to our sister mag games™. "The AppStore is already flooded with games. It's absolutely mind-boggling to discover that there were 150 games on sale at launch, and now we're approaching 2,400 just four months later. I think it's really disheartening to hear about people who've spent time writing good games for the AppStore and fail purely because there's so much clutter right now."

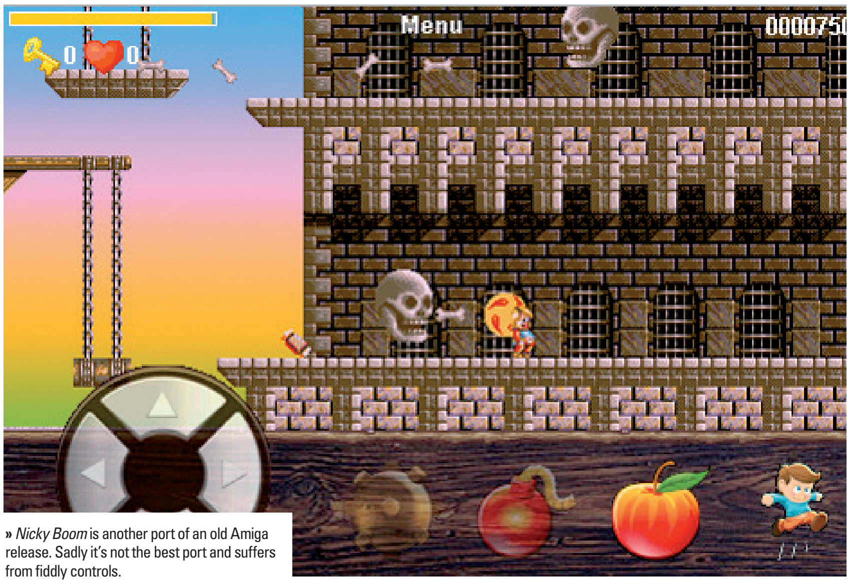
Still, you could argue that a good game will sell regardless and while iPhone games aren't exactly advertised commercially, don't underestimate the potential of the feedback system that Apple has in place. If you're purchased any item off the AppStore you're then able to leave feedback for it.

Up to five stars can be selected and it's even possible to leave comments as well. It's available to look at on both your iPhone/iTouch or the iTunes Store, and is a great way of deciding if a particular game is worth picking up. The aforementioned *Trism* has an average four star review off 563 reviews, while PopCap's impossibly popular *Bejeweled 2* has netted a four-star review from 1,347 opinions. Namco's *Pole Position* – despite being bloody good – on the other hand, only boasts a three-star rating from 59 reviews. It's still impressive, but not quite as alluring as a title like Subatomic's incredibly addictive *Fieldrunners* that maintains a four-and-a-half-star rating from a staggeringly high 5,949 separate reviews.

Of course, some have already pointed out the potential flaws of such a system, even going so far as to include bigger publishers of purposely bumping up the score to make their title seem more attractive that it actually is, but with aggregate sites like Metacritic being all the rage, it's not difficult to see why Apple settled on the system it did. Even if you didn't want to go by scores alone, it's still possible to find out how good certain games are first hand because many publishers and developers have began offering 'Lite' versions of their products, so you can at least play them briefly before parting with your cash.

Controversial star ratings aside, our main interest in the iPhone has been down to just how many classic styled games are actually available on the versatile system. Our biggest concern is that there are simply not enough hours in the day (or cash in our pockets) to be able to experience all of them.

Due to the fairly straightforward nature of the machine in terms of controls, many of the available games are often tilt or touch-orientated, but clever programming has been able to get around most of these issues with varying degrees of success. *Pac-Man* and *Ms Pac-Man*, for example, feature a selection of well thought out controls that make playing both games exceptionally easy. The Accelerometer mode enables you to move Pac-Man or his better half by simply tilting the iPhone in whatever direction you wish to move, while an on-screen joystick can also be used to move the



» *Nicky Boom* is another port of an old Amiga release. Sadly it's not the best port and suffers from fiddly controls.



Q&A

Aaron Ardiri

Meet Mr Game & Watch

RG: So how long have you been creating games for the iPhone?

AA: Pretty much as soon as the system was jail broken. I anxiously awaited the 'unofficial' SDK and got started the second it became available. I had a number of jail-broken applications on my device, so when Apple announced the SDK officially, I decided to do something real for the platform.

RG: So why did you settle on Nintendo's Game & Watch titles?

AA: *GW Chef* was written for the jail-broken phone as a fun project that I had managed to piece together (based on the previous work I had done on previous mobile platforms). I felt it was a niche concept to work on – and that everyone else would be busy writing gem-swapping games. Needless to say it worked in my favour…

RG: How long do they normally take to create?

AA: They're actually quite simple to program. They don't exactly have complex logic behind them – the majority of the work is around the artwork and ensuring the original device is replicated as much as possible, both visibly and audibly.

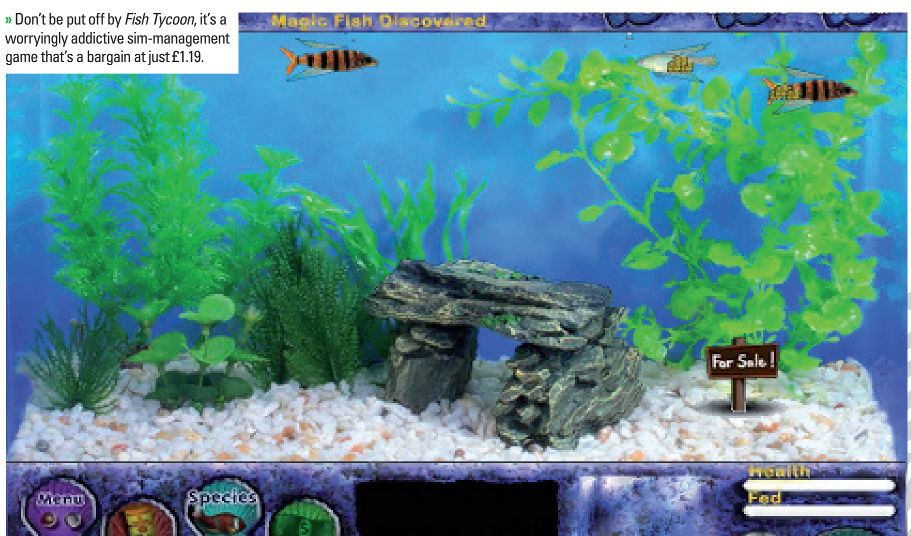
RG: Surely Nintendo can't be happy about these games?

AA: In 1999 I created a number of Game & Watch games for the Palm OS platform as well as the VTech Helio. They were: *Donkey Kong Jr*, *Donkey Kong*, *Octopus*, *Parachute* and *Fire!*. In November 2001 I was approached by Nintendo and asked to remove the games that infringed on their character trademarks – specifically *Donkey Kong*, *Donkey Kong Jr* and *Mario* (we'd also made a *Mario Bros* platformer). As a result, we quickly stopped distributing said games.

When I founded Mobile 1UP seven years later I decided that we wouldn't release and Game &\ Watch titles that could potentially infringe on those characters or any others from past Game & Watch releases [Snoopy, Mickey and Donald] so we simply stuck to generic character references like Chef, Octopus, Parachute, Fire and Helmet.

There has still been a lot of speculation has since been posted on various internet and blogs about potential IP violation and copyright infringement and I'm not sure where Nintendo currently stands (they certainly didn't defend the brand in 2001). Emulators and Simulators always draw a fine line with the legal entities of the big corporations; it is a known fact that it is not illegal to write an emulator or simulator - however, distributing binary ROM images is. I guess time will tell if we are actually in any sort of breach.





» Don't be put off by *Fish Tycoon*, it's a worryingly addictive sim-management game that's a bargain at just £1.19.

Essential Games Want a quick introduction to iPhone gaming? Then be sure to download the following

CRYSTAL DEFENDERS

■ Price: £4.99 ■ Seller: Square Enix

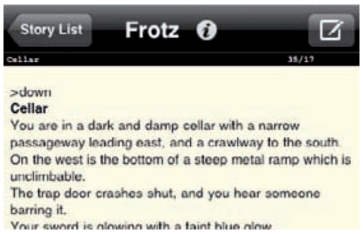
Crystal Defenders is incredibly expensive when compared to other tower defence games on the iPhone, but once you start playing you soon realise where that extra cash has gone. Based on the *Final Fantasy Tactics* series and featuring truly beautiful visuals, it's a wonderfully comprehensive package that's been split into three unique sections, catering to everyone from beginners to experts. There are also plenty of nods to the series, so *Tactics* fans will be in seventh heaven.



FROTZ

■ Price: Free ■ Seller: Craig Smith

Love text adventures? Then you need *Frotz*, an application that will give you hours and hours of classic text adventure fun. It then lets you run any said adventure that utilises the Z-Machine format. The app itself comes preloaded with a host of different games, but the ability to add URLs means that a huge amount of games are available, providing you know where to look. An excellent app that's rekindled our love for *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*.



WARFARE INCORPORATED

■ Price: £2.99 ■ Spiffcode

Boasting numerous awards and the very highest of accolades, it doesn't take long to appreciate the sheer amount of magic that's been crammed into this astonishing RTS. Gorgeous graphics, a brilliantly designed interface and constantly challenging levels make this one of the best portable RTSs that we've ever had the pleasure to play. The ability to add your own community maps and play online means that you're never ever going to get bored of it. A truly staggering achievement.



SIM CITY

■ Price: £4.99 ■ Seller: Electronic Arts Nederland BV

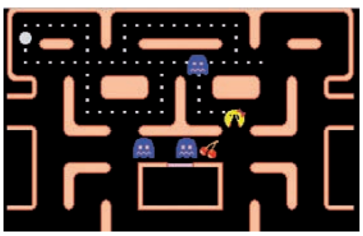
Electronic Arts has only released a few games on the iPhone so far, but don't let that put you off, as the quality of them is excellent. While the tiny size of the city can make things initially tricky to get to grips with, your fingers quickly make amends and you're just left with a classic port of Will Wright's hit game. Don't be put off by the DS versions as this blows them out of the water. Granted, the price is steeper than some, but the quality is undeniable.



MS PAC-MAN

■ Price: £3.49 ■ Seller: Namco Networks America

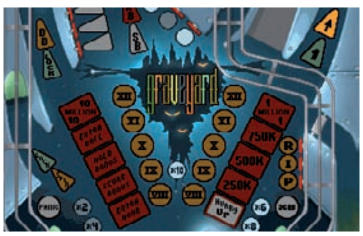
We've always preferred this sequel to the 1980 original, and Namco Bandai has given the classic arcade game a cracking iPhone outing. The original has been faithfully replicated; the controls are a joy to use and the gameplay remains as addictive as ever. The lack of an online leaderboard is something of a missed opportunity, but it's a small niggle that doesn't really matter in the grand scheme of things. An excellent update of an old classic.



PINBALL DREAMING: PINBALL DREAMS

■ Price: £3.49 ■ Seller: Cowboy Rodeo

We just got our hands on this as we went to press, but we're extremely pleased with this incredibly slick port. Expertly ported by Cowboy Rodeo, *Pinball Dreaming* is a wonderfully accurate port of the original Amiga hit and comes with some very nice new touches. You can play in either portrait or landscape modes, the table can be tilted with a quick shake of the phone, while the original Amiga visuals have also been included for extra authenticity.



FIELDRUNNERS

■ Price: £2.99 ■ Seller: Subatomic Studios

Tower defence games are all the rage on the iPhone, but this wonderful effort from Subatomic Studios is easily the best of the bunch, and one that we've been unable to put down since finding it. The lack of available levels is a real drag, but in terms of design and execution, nothing else comes close to it. Square's *Crystal Defenders* may feel that little more complete, but the amount of depth that *Fieldrunners* offers is astonishing. It's so addictive that we played it 'til our iPod Touch ran out of juice.



BEJEWELED 2

■ Price: £1.79 ■ Seller: PopCap Games

We've played many iterations of PopCap's most popular puzzle game, but this iPhone variant is easily the best. The precise touch screen makes swapping jewels incredibly easy, and even when the timer ticks down the screen always responds accurately to your frenzied swipes. PopCap also had the good sense to save your game whenever you quit the app, meaning you can easily nip in and out for a quick blast if you have a few spare minutes to kill. The very definition of gaming on the go.



"The barrier to entry for iPhone devs is quite small"

- GARETH NOYCE



iconic character around the screen. Last, but by no means least is the superb swipe mode that enables you to immediately change direction with a quick flick of a finger. Other companies use similar effects, Gameloft's graphically amazing *Hero Of Sparta* features a similar virtual joystick (albeit one that's not quite as effective), but Namco's effort is by far the most impressive we've yet used. Once gamers get over the initial weirdness of controlling a game via a joystick that isn't actually there, we're sure that similar systems will become far more common in the future.

Still, while we've been impressed at the inroads bigger publishers like Gameloft, Namco Bandai and Electronic Arts are making, it's the many retro themed games getting released on the system that are constantly managing to impress us. Search hard enough and you can find games based on *Chop Lifter*, *Lunar Lander*, *Bust-A-Move*, *Arkanoid*, Nintendo's Game & Watch series, *Rampart*, *Space Invaders*. *Star Control*. *Star Wars*, *Asteroids*, *Missile Command* and *Computer Space*, while Peter Hirschberg's current project is a fantastic looking take on *Battlezone* that already has us impatiently awaiting its release.

But why are all these games popping up on the system when titles like *Hero Of Spartan* and Konami's incoming *Metal Gear Solid Touch* prove that Apple's machine is capable of so much more? Why are so many people happy enough to spend a couple of quid on something like *Pac-Man* when they could be experiencing more complex fare like *Brothers In Arms*? "I'm only guessing, but there are probably a lot of people like me developing for it – people that haven't got a lot of 3D experience, or who have never written a game by themselves," begins Gareth Noyce who has recently released an *Arkanoid* clone called *BallzUp*. "The barrier to entry for iPhone dev is really quite small. The hardware is quick enough for 2D games, and people are actually interested in buying them again. So, for a first project, what better than a re-imagining of a game that you used to love?" Hirschberg's theory is more abrupt but just as relevant. "Guys in their forties with enough money to blow on an expensive handheld device – that just about sums it up to me. Plus the retro-styled games are more suited to the hardware due to the simple graphics, sound, and low engagement 'snacking' factor that they boast."

Perhaps one of the biggest advantages these games have is their relative simplicity in the first place. Due to the limited nature of Apple's device (as far as input is concerned) games like *Pole Position* and *Missile Command* can all be played by just tilting or touching the screen, and yet they still contain all the fun you would have experienced when you first played them in the arcades. It's the age-old argument of gameplay over graphics, but in the case of the iPhone it becomes particularly relevant, as the more complex-looking titles that are available on the machine often suffer because they can't quite offer the same experience as their console or handheld equivalents.

Of course, while we've enjoyed playing variations on *Asteroids*, *Breakout* and *Space Invaders*, it's important to remember that many

You've got the touch



iClones The very best copycat games currently available for download

GW OCTOPUS

■ Price: £1.19 ■ Seller: Mobile 1Up

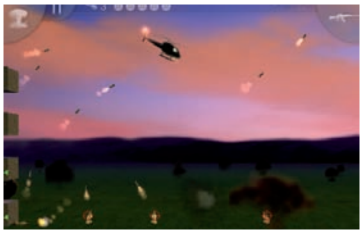
Aaron Ardiri's Game & Watch ports are all excellent, but if we had to settle for one it would have to be the wonderful *Octopus*. Worryingly addictive, *Octopus* looks absolutely fantastic and is only let down by the rather weak tilt controls (although better control methods are also included). In fact, we're so impressed with the accuracy of Ardiri's port that we still can't believe that Ardiri hasn't had Nintendo's lawyers knocking on his door. If you've ever loved your childhood, you need this game.



CHOPPER

■ Price: £2.99 ■ Seller: Majic Jungle Software

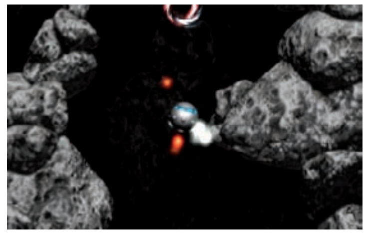
There are plenty of ports of *Chop Lifter* available if you're prepared to look around for them, but let us make things easier for you by recommending this one. What makes *Chopper* such a treat to play is how well the controls have been implemented and the way additional elements like bombs and gunfire are slowly opened up to you. The 20 included missions are varied and a joy to play through, while your chopper responds perfectly to even the gentlest of nudges.



RETRO – CAVE FLYER

■ Price: £3.49 ■ Seller: Namco Networks America

Until an official version of *Lunar Lander* appears, this is easily your best alternative. Boasting dynamic physics and a control system that makes exceptional use of the iPhone's accelerometer, *Retro – Cave Flyer* is a wonderful fusion of high-end visuals and age-old game mechanics and highlights just how easy is it to give a classic style of game a next-gen spin. Picking up stranded pilots gets amazingly tricky on the later levels, but it's put together with so much care and attention you simply won't care.



BUBBLE BASH

■ Price: £1.19 ■ Seller: Gameloft

Look behind the gaudy visuals and those sickeningly cute characters and you'll discover the best *Bust-A-Move* clone that's currently available on the iPhone. The classic Taito gameplay has been brilliantly translated to the iPhone's touch screen, while Gameloft has included an impressive amount of additional game modes to ensure that it all remains nice and varied. Responsive controls, entertaining gameplay and an attractive price point all combine to create another essential download.





"I didn't expect Adventure to even make it to the AppStore"

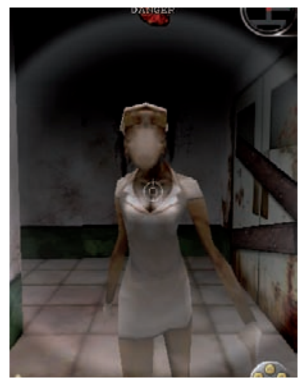
- PETER HIRSCHBERG

of these games are still owned by publishers, who are unlikely to take too kindly to their precious franchises potentially generating money for independent coders. Hirschberg, whose first game is an unlicensed port of Atari's classic 2600 *Adventure* is fully aware of the potential problems he could eventually run into…

"In the case of *Adventure*, sure I'm concerned," Hirschberg begins. "I didn't expect the game to even make it to the AppStore – I just created it for myself. If they [Atari] contact me then I'll take it down. End of story. I'm not charging any money for the app and I certainly don't plan on doing so. In fact, I'd actually be very interested in talking with the original copyright owners about either doing a licensed version for them or perhaps partnering to produce a bunch of their old games for them. That would be absolutely fantastic. With *Vector Tanks*, I feel it is different enough from any other existing games that I am safe. I would argue that *Vector Tanks* is no more *Battlezone* than a 3D version of the Eighties vector game *Armor Attack* (it's actually more like *Armor Attack* content-wise, with tanks, jeeps and helicopters), or the old PC game *Arctic Fox*. As far as I'm aware, nobody has a trademark on 'tank game drawn with green lines'."



» We're already massively excited about Peter Hirschberg's incoming *Vector Tanks*.



"Copyright infringement is definitely a potential problem," agrees Noyce. "I think I've been pretty lucky with *BallZup* as it was one of the later *Breakout*/*Arkanoid* clones to appear on the AppStore (and there have been many!) and I was consciously trying to take it in a slightly different direction from the very beginning."

Predictably, bigger studios take an altogether different approach to the constant unofficial clones that are rapidly spreading across Apple's AppStore. While nothing series has happened just yet, we're beginning to wonder just how long it's going to be before we see our first high-profile lawsuit concerning something that gets released on the system.

"These unofficial clones and ports are bound to pop up now and again, especially on a platform with such a low-entry barrier," explains EA's Peter Gunn. "In the most positive light, it could be seen as a way for the community to pay homage to the original source material. However, the reality is that such copycats are impinging on pre-existing rights and are not something we can support. At Electronic Arts, we are justifiably proud of our games, our world-renowned brands and our innovative gameplay."

Apple's approach to policing the AppStore may not be suitable for everyone, but *Last Day At Work*'s Arthur K Humphrey at least understands the stance that Apple has taken and feels that it's the best option under the unique circumstances that the AppStore currently finds itself in.

"It appears that Apple is following in the precedent forged by eBay and others that have already had to deal with this issue," Humphrey explains. "It is very, very difficult for them to police every application, especially for less clear things like trademark and copyright infringement. It makes sense for them, instead, to take a passive compliance position and respond quickly to any infringement

AEROLITE

■ Price: £1.19 ■ Seller: Sputnik Games

It's difficult choosing an *Asteroid* clone on the iPhone because there's so many of them. *Aerolite* may lack the authentic vectors of the original arcade hit, but developer Mark Andrade has managed to get pretty much everything else right. Controls are surprisingly fluid and easy to use. The difficulty slowly builds into a real monumental challenge, while it's also possible to drag the on-screen controls to wherever you want if you do find yourself having a hard time.

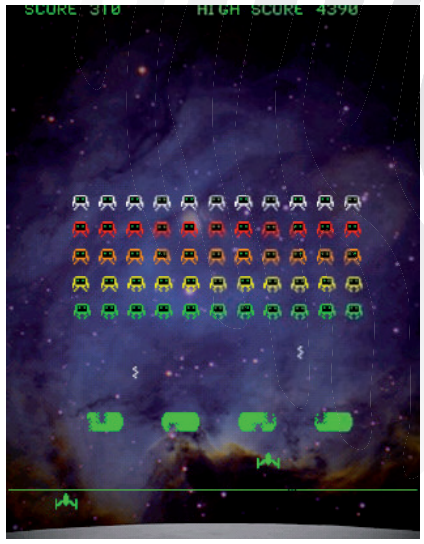


BOMBER ONLINE

■ Price: 59p ■ Seller: Eurocenter

Although there's an official online version of *Bomberman* already available on the iPhone, we've found ourselves spending more and more time with this impressive clone by Stephane Porta. As with many of the best clones *Bomber Online* works because its creator obviously has a real love for the original, as it easily shines past the cute visuals and average audio. A great multiplayer mode is the icing on a delicious cake – er… *bomb*.





» See if you can guess which game *Alien Attack* is based on…



notifications that come up. This way they stay compliant and legal, and they leave the detective work to the trademark owners (like us). It's maybe not ideal, but it is certainly understandable."

Ultimately, though, who does this responsibility for checking content come down to? Apple's submission process is already praised by many who use it because it's so much more accessible than those that are in place for Xbox Live Arcade, WiiWare and Sony's PlayStation Network. With so many games and applications getting released on a daily basis, has Apple bitten off potentially more than it can chew?

"Who knows?" continues Noyce. "I don't think it's reasonable to expect Apple to police that on their own; for all the time they've been around, this is their first big game platform, so they need to strike a balance between allowing/fostering development and reacting positively and quickly to cases of infringement brought to their attention. That gives everyone confidence in the platform and the iTunes Store in general."

Regardless of how these potential cases do evolve, the fact remains that there are plenty of fantastic games currently on the system, with many of the being available for little to no money. Take *Tap Tap Revenge*, for example. It's an excellent rhythm-action title by Tapulous that doesn't cost a penny to download and is constantly updated with new songs, all of which are free. Needless to say, when Tapulous did start releasing reasonably prised apps quality was assured and the likes of *Tap Tap Dance* and *Christmas With Weezer* have proven to be extremely popular for the company. What happens though when you're a small independent who's launching a new game that you do want to make money from? With games costing anything from free to £6+, it's certainly not easy finding the correct price point.

"I initially set the price for *BallZup* at £3.99," begins Noyce. "In my head this was just a bit more than a pint, which seemed like a reasonable price for a game. Obviously, the AppStore is heavily influenced toward cheaper products, so I've since dropped down to £2.39 to see how that affects sales. It's early days on that right now, but I do have the flexibility to do this when I please, and the AppStore updates price changes within an hour, which is fantastic stuff."

While there's no denying that it's initially rather weird to be able to play games from the Eighties on such a swanky piece of kit, you'll soon ignore the weird juxtaposition and simply concentrate on the many great titles that are continuing to appear on Apple's machine. Providing the bigger studios and homebrew developers are able to co-exist in peace, it would appear that the future of Apple's iPhone remains very bright. As long as that future includes a continuing library of gaming's past then we're going to be more than happy.



» Electronic Arts is slowly making its name felt on Apple's machine. As well as remakes of traditional board games like Monopoly, it's also released the classic *Sim City*.



Q&A

Gareth Noyce

What do homebrew developers think of Apple's machine?

RG: When did you start coding?

GN: The first program I wrote was a password checker. [It was] inspired by the film *War Games* that I wrote when I first got my CPC 6128. I upgraded to an Amiga in the early Nineties and dabbled a bit with Assembly and then with AMOS. I had more formal training at university and had some great luck with my first job, as that exposed me to commercial programming and provided me with an outlet for doing graphics on the side.

RG: Why did you decide to start making games for the iPhone?

GN: I picked up an iPod Touch when they were first released and was just blown away by how good they were to use – it just felt like a bit of the future had suddenly landed in my pocket! I'd also been a long-term convert to OSX, so had all the prerequisites in place to develop.

RG: Why make a game based on *Arkanoid*?

GN: A couple of us were down the pub, bouncing ideas about for things to do with the touch screen. During the drunken discussion I kind of blurted out *Arkanoid* and that got a few nods of approval. If I'm totally honest, the inspiration wasn't so much *Arkanoid*, but the Spectrum game *Batty*. I really loved that back in the day.

RG: How do you compete with the other *Arkanoid*-style games on the system?

GN: I'm still working on this. A few things have become obvious though – I gave away too much in the demo, so I'm going to replace *BallZup Lite* with a free version that has fewer levels, but it makes it easier for people to buy the full version. We'll see how that goes. In the end, though, I made a decision not to spend on marketing, [because] this is just a home project and not a full-time job. Initially it's all been word of mouth, but most of the feedback I've been getting has been positive and sales have been consistent.

RG: What do you think of programmers who release early unfinished games and then add to them until they're complete?

GN: Positives and negatives. I don't think anyone should be selling wholly incomplete or non-functional software for money. That's just a bit rude at the end of the day, and worse than that, it makes people wary of taking a chance on an iPhone game if they've been burnt. There's not much that we can do to avoid that right now, but it's not all doom and gloom: the reviews are normally quick to point out seriously shoddy work, and I hope buyers are taking the time to read a few of them before they buy.



The PC rarely leaps to mind when retro gaming discussions turn to the subject of great platformers. All this changed in 1994, however, when *Jazz Jackrabbit* was released. With its excellent graphics, screens scrolling fast yet smooth, the experience that PC owners could squeeze out of their 486s was marvellous. Throw into the mix a wide range of levels and weapons and this platformer was a hit. Craig Ritchie looks at one of the titles that helped see the PC evolve from office workhorse to gaming powerhouse.



Jazz Jackrabbit

Height: **3'1"** Weight: **90 lbs** Favourite Food: **Carrot Pizza** Favourite Book: **Watership Down** Motto: **"When you're a little rabbit, carry a BIG gun!"**

A brave young rabbit and the hero of our tale, the green furred Jazz embarks on a gun-totin', carrot munchin' quest to rescue his sweetheart from the evil Devan Shell.



Devan Shell

Height: **2'4"** Weight: **163 lbs** Favourite Food: **Asparagus** Favourite Book: **How To Make Friends And Kill Rabbits** Motto: **"Rabbits are lousy!"**

Traumatised by rabbit-envy, Mr Shell is unable to get over the age-old tortoise/hare rivalry made famous by Aesop's fables. His solution? Kidnap Jazz's dream girl, for some reason.



Eva Earlong

Height: **3'9"** Weight: **Won't tell** Favourite Food: **Turnip Ice Cream** Favourite Book: **My Secret Carrot Garden**

Motto: **"Take your time, Jazz."**

Glamorous and sporting a huge pair of… ears, Eva is any hare's pin-up of choice. In fact, one would think that such a desirable bunny would have more suitors out to rescue her…

WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



Is that running on a PC?!

Already outdone by their Atari ST and Amiga-owning buddies, early-Nineties PC gamers had to then accept being even further down on the coolness ladder after *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Super Mario World* hit the scene. They had no real competition in the cute platformer stakes until Epic Megagames' *Jazz* arrived. The developers, having opted for the shareware delivery model, watched PC gamers the world over quickly spreading this hardcore hare among each other and, after excellent sales, released extra levels. *Jazz Jackrabbit* is a classic, without which the system might never have seen the likes of *Rayman* and *Earthworm Jim*.

BEST CHARACTER



Jazz himself

Well designed with cutesy speech clips and detailed animation, Jazz is a pleasure both to control and behold. His range of power-ups, weapons and extras are delivered over the course of a few stages, allowing players to gradually come to grips with everything the heroic hare has to offer. What is more, the developers managed to convey real personality through the little sprite, a vital ingredient that Sonic, Megaman and Mario had all mastered before, yet not all imitators managed to achieve. One would be hard-pressed to find a Nineties PC gamer who doesn't fondly remember the little green rabbit with the big blue gun.

BEST BOSS



Well, you say 'best'…

The whole end of level boss thing was definitely an area where *Jazz Jackrabbit* let players down – the 'Guardians' all had very simple movement patterns and were often ludicrously easy to kill. There was even one where Jazz could just fire away from the starting position, safely out of reach of the baddie, pelting him with bullets until he was dead. Interesting. So deciding on the best boss in the game was a fairly easy choice, as you really can't go wrong with an evil tortoise riding on the back of an ostrich, all the while kicking and shooting fireballs at Mr J Jackrabbit. Easy to defeat, sure, but good for a few laughs all the same.

BEST WEAPON



'Escort bird' just sounds so dodgy

While Jazz had some great ammo options to fire from his trademark blue rifle, our favourite weapon is, in fact, a bird that flies overhead firing on any enemies that come within range. Dubbed 'Hip Hop', this flying friend was the closest Jazz came to having any sort of companion (in the original game, at least). For some reason, he'd abandon the bunny as soon as he took even a single hit, which is kind of strange… you'd think that the bird would hang around when Jazz needed him the most? Still, Hip Hop's yellow projectile attack was incredibly powerful and has definitely saved many a life bar from depletion.

BEST STAGE



Scrapa-wraps it up

What *Jazz Jackrabbit* may have lacked in terms of boss battles, it more than made up for in level design and variation. And while there were, of course, a few frustrating moments, the levels were nevertheless bright, colourful and intricately put together. The settings were varied from desert to tropical, underwater to outer space and everything in between. One particular standout is the Scraparap setting. Great artwork, tons of collectables, and being challenging without tipping the scale to frustrating, all worked together to create a perfectly crafted platforming experience. A shining example of excellent level design.

STANDOUT MOMENT



Sonic the what?

After taking in the sights and sounds that *Jazz Jackrabbit* had to offer, players would inevitably stumble upon a new power-up icon: a TV with a red shoe in it. Once this was collected our Jazz could run at incredible super-sonic (hey hey!) speeds while the music played in double-time. Hmmm, not so much an allusion to as an unashamed and blatant rip-off of Sega's long-time mascot. The thing is, the reference was so obvious that the people at Epic could never be accused of trying to steal something to make it their own. Rather, they were saying 'we like this idea, and we're going to blow your minds by showing that your PCs can do it, too'.



What the press said… ages ago

Gamespot (9.5/10)

"Is *Jazz* better than *Sonic*? Maybe. *Jazz*, I believe, has the better graphics, music, and levels, but *Sonic* has slightly more refined and classic gameplay. Nonetheless, *Jazz* is an epic (pun intended) classic."

What we think

Jazz Jackrabbit is definitely a fun platforming jaunt, but truth be told, part of what made the game such a classic was the technological achievement of the time. Definitely worth giving a solid playthrough, but you probably won't be dying to uncover every secret and 100% every level.



IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** DOS
- **DEVELOPER:** EPIC GAMES
- **PUBLISHER:** EPIC GAMES
- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £6+

MEG

MANY GAMERS ASSOCIATE THE NAME 'MEGA-CD' WITH 'ABJECT FAILURE', BUT OTHERS BELIEVE THE PLATFORM'S ONLY FAILING WAS TO BRING CD-ROM TECHNOLOGY TO THE PARTY A GENERATION TOO SOON. **DAMIEN MCFERRAN** CELEBRATES A TIME WHEN SEGA WASN'T AFRAID TO TAKE MASSIVE RISKS IN THE HARDWARE ARENA

INSTANT EXPERT

- **Some later Mega** CD games were coded to make use of the additional power of the ill-fated 32X add-on – when fully assembled, this hardware setup was quite a beast and required three different power supplies.
- **The Mega-CD** was also able to play the CD-G+, a format used mainly to display karaoke lyrics on screen – a karaoke add-on was also produced for the system.
- **Digital Picture's** *Sewer Shark* and *Night Trap* were going to be released on the Super Nintendo CD-ROM system – when this was cancelled, a deal was signed to bring them to Mega-CD.
- **All Mega-CD** games carry a region lockout system. This can be circumvented by chipping the machine or purchasing a converter cartridge (such as Datel's CDX) that slots into the Mega Drive's cartridge port.
- **The Ricoh RF5C164** sound chip is one of the machine's greatest assets and grants an additional eight channels of sound, all of which can be used to play samples.
- **Game saves were** recorded to the Mega CD's internal RAM; it was also possible to purchase a RAM cartridge that would offer even more space. Some games – such as *Shining Force* CD – required so much memory to save a game that these carts were almost essential.
- **The Mega Drive** and Mega-CD both feature the same 16-bit Motorola 68000 CPU, but the one present in the Mega-CD has a clock speed almost twice as fast.
- **Notable 'pack-in' games** included *Road Avenger, Sol-Feace, Cobra Command* and *Sega Arcade Classics*, which featured several popular Mega Drive games such as *Golden Axe* and *Revenge Of Shinobi*.
- **Titles such as** *Ernest Evans* and *Sol-Feace* were later released on the Mega Drive, with only the CD audio and cut-scenes missing.
- **Rapper-turned-thespian** Mark Wahlberg can count himself as a Mega-CD star – he appeared in *Marky Mark: Make My Video*, which allowed players to edit three of the Funky Bunch's songs.

They say that pride comes before a fall but as the first broadsides of the 16-bit war were unleashed at the dawn of the Nineties, Sega certainly had plenty to feel proud about. The launch of the Mega Drive (rebranded 'Genesis' in the US) had transformed the company from plucky also-ran to industry leader virtually overnight; the hitherto unchallenged dominance of Nintendo's 8-bit NES was broken and by the time 1992 arrived Sega was able to call 50 per cent of the American home console market its own.

It was during this exciting period in Sega's history that Scot Bayless joined the company. He vividly remembers what it was like to work for Sega at its peak: "It was exhilarating; we were running about 50 per cent on sheer bravado. One of the great things about Sega in those days was the company's willingness to just try stuff. We had a T-shirt made with the slogan 'This may not work, but what the hell' – that was pretty much our attitude." Such joyous ebullience imbued Sega with the confidence to experiment with new technology – and in this case, it was the medium of CD-ROM that intrigued the Japanese firm.

Coming straight from Spectrum Holobyte (where he worked on the epic air combat flight simulator *Falcon 3.0*) Bayless took the position of Technical Director at Sega of America and was ultimately put in charge of overseeing the US debut of Sega's latest piece of hardware – the Mega-CD. It wasn't the first company to embrace the possibilities of the shiny plastic disc – rival NEC had produced its own CD-ROM add-on for the 8-bit PC Engine in 1988 – but with the Sega brand in the ascendancy and the war between the Mega Drive and Nintendo's SNES about to go global, all eyes were on this latest system and the new era of technological brilliance it was about to usher in. "Sega of Japan was already well along the road and the first development kits showed up not long after I did," reveals Bayless. "My first responsibility was to help get the first demos ready for the big announcement event in New York."

Year released: 1991 (Japan), 1992 (US), 1993 (UK)

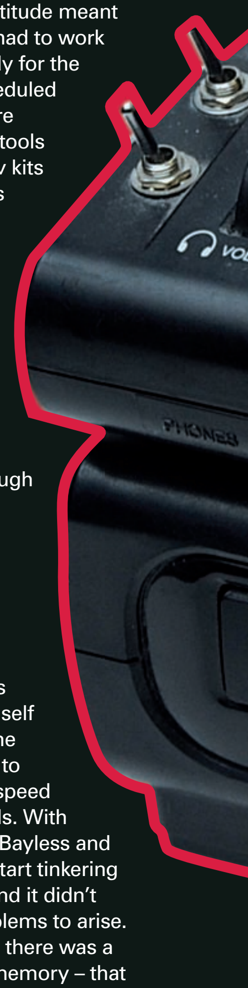
Original price: ¥49,800 (Japan), $300 (US), £270 (UK)

Buy it now for: £15+

Associated magazines: *Megatech, Mean Machines Sega, Sega Power, Sega Pro, Mega*

Why the Mega-CD was great…
For many gamers it was their first glimpse of the raw potential offered by the CD-ROM format, and while it wasn't the success that Sega might have hoped for, you can't deny that the Mega-CD was privy to some wonderful games. Plus the 'Mark 1' Mega Drive and Mega-CD combi is one of the sexiest hardware setups in the history of consoles – fact.

The machine had been conceived by Sega's top hardware team in Japan, but so fearful was the company of internal leaks that it had been intentionally slow to provide Sega of America with vital technical information relating to the project. This clandestine attitude meant that Bayless and his team had to work overtime to get things ready for the US launch, which was scheduled for 1992. "At that point there were virtually no software tools – only barely functional dev kits and incomplete documents that were being translated more slowly than they were being revised," he remembers. "There was one stretch where I spent four continuous days in the building – as in didn't actually leave the premises. I lived off vending machines and coffee while I slogged through a bunch of systems code, trying to get the demos to function reliably."

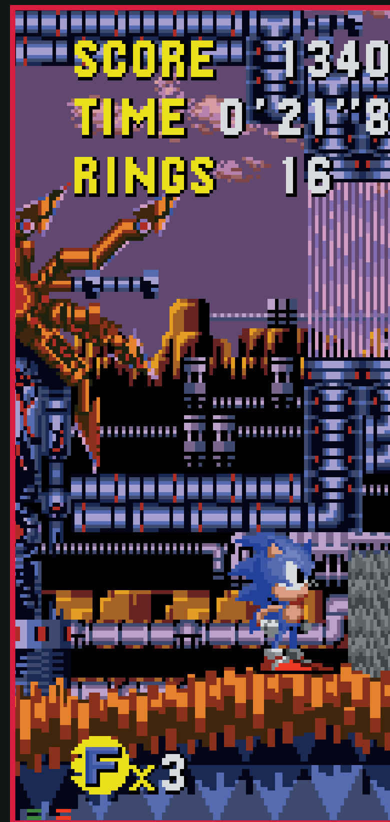


Because the hardware development was being done exclusively by Sega's Japanese team, Bayless decided early on that it was vital that he familiarise himself with the new machine. "One of the first things I did was to go to Tokyo and get up to speed on the hardware," he recalls. With the relevant tools in place, Bayless and his US team were able to start tinkering around with the console, and it didn't take long for potential problems to arise. "The big headline was that there was a second CPU with its own memory – that was the good news," he says. "The bad news was that the data path between

A-CD


ON
OFF
POWER
RESET
16-BIT
POWER ON
MEGA DRIVE
SEGA
CONTROL 1
CONTROL 2
MEGA-CD
SEGA
READY
COMPACT disc
ACCESS
CD ACCESS
CD IN
CD OUT
STAND-BY MODE





COMMUNITY MEGA-CD SITES TO WATCH

PAL Sega Mega-CD Library

http://www.sega-mega-cd-library.co.uk

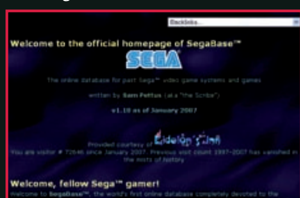
If you're thinking of collecting every single PAL Mega-CD release then this site is an essential resource. It contains an exhaustive collection of Mega-CD info, including details about games that never made it and how to emulate the Mega-CD on your PC.



SegaBase

http://www.eidolons-inn.net/tiki-index.php?page=SegaBase

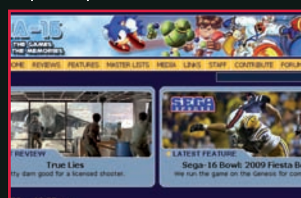
Although it's not specifically aimed at covering the Mega-CD, SegaBase is one of the longest running Sega resources on the net and is home to an excellent piece on the history of the Mega-CD.



Sega-16

http://www.sega-16.com/

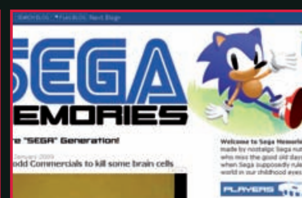
Another long-running Sega fan site, Sega-16 is incredibly professional and a joy to navigate. It houses loads of Mega-CD reviews as well as some intriguing features regarding Sega's history. It's all too easy to get hopelessly lost in this excellent site.



Sega Memories

http://sega-memories.blogspot.com/

If your rose-tinted specs have a pronounced 'blue' hue to them then this site will float your boat. Again, it's not expressly aimed at covering the Mega-CD but the sheer volume of Sega nostalgia is guaranteed to strike a cord with fans of the machine.

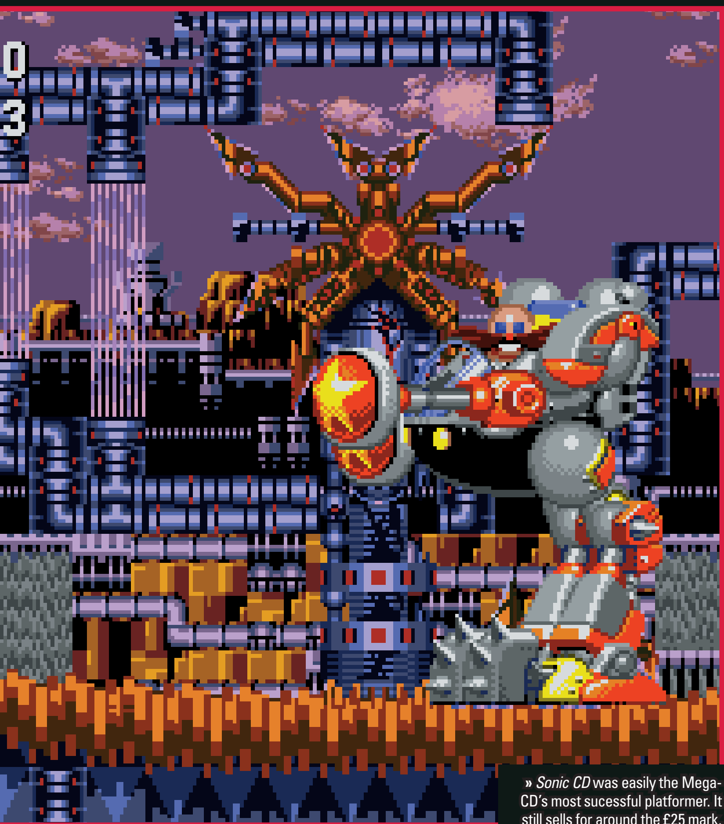


the Mega Drive and the Mega-CD was very limited. What really stood out was the machine's ability to store (for that time) ridiculous amounts of data; the real challenge was figuring out what to do with all that storage. Given the tools of the time, the human cost of building that much content was prohibitive, so people started looking at other possibilities. Probably the most promising element of the hardware was the sound system; it hugely enhanced the sound capabilities of the system of the Mega Drive. But, short of just playing back Red Book audio, nothing really interesting got done with that lovely hardware."



Of course, Bayless couldn't go public with his concerns; Nintendo was gearing up for the launch of the Super Nintendo and as a result Sega was putting a lot of effort into making the Mega-CD a success. However, even when he tried to talk up the power of the console, it didn't always work out as expected. Take the infamous 'Blast Processing' boast, for example. "Sadly I have to take responsibility for that ghastly phrase," admits Bayless with a grimace. "One of our programmers called Marty Franz discovered that you could do this nifty trick by hooking the scan line interrupt and firing off a Direct Memory Access at just the right time. The result was that you could effectively jam data onto the graphics chip while the scan line was being drawn – which meant you could drive the Digital-to-Analogue Converters with 8 bits per pixel. Assuming you could get the timing just right, you could effectively draw 256 colour static images. There were all kinds of subtleties to the timing and the trick didn't work reliably on all iterations of the hardware, but you could do it and it was cool as heck. So during the run-up to the Western launch of Mega-CD the PR guys interviewed me about what made the platform interesting from a technical standpoint and somewhere in there I mentioned the fact that you could just 'blast data into the DACs'. They loved the word 'blast' and the next thing I knew 'Blast Processing' was born."

Tinkering around with new technology was undeniably fun but not having any input into the actual development of the machine was frustrating for Bayless and his team at Sega of America. However, as fate would have it, they were able to pitch in with critical assistance from time to time. "There was one technical issue that we did a pretty good job of coping with before it got onto consumers' radar," remembers Bayless. "The CD drive Sega of Japan chose was, predictably, an inexpensive single speed consumer CD drive. What nobody stopped to think about was how that drive would get used by those early FMV games. I got this frantic call one day from the Quality Assurance guys; they were using retail Mega-CDs – the same ones queuing up to be sold to consumers – for final QA, and they were suddenly experiencing an insane hardware failure rate. Units were burning up in droves; in fact, a few of them had literally caught fire as they died. We were in the big push toward launch and the whole place was in a panic because QA was out of hardware on which to test games. It was like an episode of *House*; the patient was doomed but nobody could figure out why. About all we knew was that the systems started flaming out when the FMV-based titles were being tested by QA. All of those games used some form of multi-stream video technique, which meant they were constantly seeking the read head in the drive. What



» *Sonic CD* was easily the Mega-CD's most sucessful platformer. It still sells for around the £25 mark.







finally tipped me off was an obscure manufacturer's specification for the CD drive; it was rated for a five per cent duty cycle – which means that they were expecting that no more than five per cent of the time would the drive be seeking from one track to another. It was built for people who wanted to play music CDs and, of course, you rarely seek between tracks more than once every few minutes, so five per cent was way more than they'd ever expected people to need. What nobody anticipated was a multi-stream FMV videogame seeking 75 per cent of the time – or more. We were literally cooking the motors that moved the heads." Bayless had identified the problem in the nick of time and ultimately saved Sega from suffering a potentially catastrophic PR blunder.

Despite these setbacks, the allure of CD-ROM technology – coupled with Sega's recently elevated status within the videogame industry – meant that hype for the Mega-CD grew exponentially as the launch drew ever closer. As a result, Bayless found himself receiving phone calls from somewhat unexpected quarters. "I remember I was sitting in my office one day tinkering with some low level code when the phone rang," he recalls. "This sexy female voice said, 'Is this Scot Bayless?' I said, 'Yes,' and she replied, 'This is David Bowie's office. Can you please hold?' It turned out it was Bowie's manager, a very cool guy named Bob Goodale. Bowie was completely jazzed about the potential of Mega-CD as a window for music into games." The artist formerly known as The Thin White Duke wasn't the only musician to take interest in the aural capabilities of the Sega's new baby. "I had the bizarre meeting with Michael Jackson around the same time," Bayless remembers. "He'd already signed the *Moonwalker* deal with Sega and they were touring him around the Redwood City studio. I spent about half an hour showing him all kinds of techie stuff we were doing and not once did he ever comment or even make eye contact; he just kind of stood there with about 15 of his minions hovering around him. When we finished there we walked him over to the sound studio, which was just down the hall. Suddenly there was this new person in the room; it was uncanny. Jackson came to life like someone had flipped a switch. It was obvious that the only thing he was excited about was the music."

The Japanese launch of the Mega-CD took place in December 1991. Units flew off the shelves despite the high retail price of ¥49,800, but the relatively small installed base of the Mega Drive in that region meant that sales soon dipped. Sega knew that the US launch was far more important, given the strength of the Genesis. It took place almost a year later (with the machine being re-christened 'Sega-CD') and although the public was ravenous for this new add-on, production issues meant that a paltry 50,000 units were made available to American retailers. Like Japan, the price was bordering on the prohibitive but Sega's lofty standing Stateside helped the company quickly sell through what limited stock it had; by the time 1992 drew to a close, 200,000 units had found their way into US gamers' homes. Likewise, 60,000 of the 70,000 machines made available for the UK release the following spring were snapped up before August. It was a positive start, but it wasn't to last.

With the Super NES and Genesis/Mega Drive locked in deadly combat, Sega of America decided to brandish the Mega-CD as a unique weapon in the

"A few units had caught fire as they died" SCOT BAYLESS ON INITIAL PROBLEMS

» SIMS' *Vay* was picked up for Western release by Working Designs but failed to make the same impact as *Lunar*. It was given a new lease of life on Apple's iPhone.



VERSIONS SOME OF THE BEST



Mark II
Introduced in order to bring down costs, the Mk II model is smaller than the original and lacks the motorised CD tray and function lights. It's also a lot less sexy than the previous model, but in its favour it takes up less room and is more reliable.



Wondermega
JVC decided it wanted a bite of the Mega-CD cherry and produced this sleek, all-in-one unit. MIDI and karaoke options were included and the hybrid console was even released Stateside as the X'Eye, although sales were disappointing.



Multi-Mega
The Multi-Mega was little bigger than a portable CD player (it could even be used as such and was powered by two AA batteries for audio playback) but the price was bordering on the insane – UK gamers were expected to shell out £500 for it.



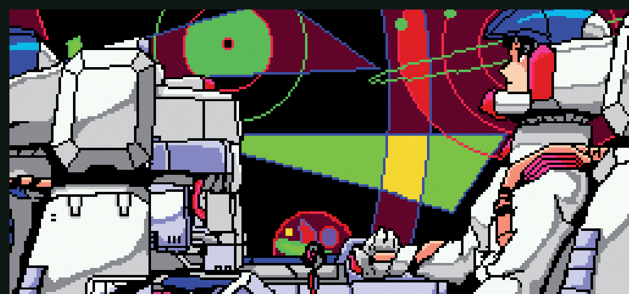
Aiwa CSD-GM1
Perhaps the rarest of all the Mega-CD systems, this Mega Drive/Mega-CD combo looks very much like a traditional boom box. It was produced in limited numbers and only saw distribution in Asia, and as a result it is almost impossible to track down these days.



» Renamed the CDX in the US, the Multi-Mega fused the Mega Drive and Mega-CD into one package – but at £500 in the UK, the pricing was way off.



» Sega focused on promoting the machine's unique FMV-based games, but people soon realised that this gaming revolution was a false dawn of epic proportions.





» *Jurassic Park CD* was a massive undertaking for Sega's newly-founded multimedia studio, but with Scot Bayless's guidance, it ended up being pretty decent.



fight against rival Nintendo. A dedicated multimedia studio was established within the company's Californian headquarters at great expense in order to produce top-quality content with which to fill the Mega-CD's shiny discs. "It was a pretty cool place and Sega was willing to invest a lot of money in making it a showpiece," explains Bayless. "The art team was buying SGI Indigo work stations for about $50K per seat, including a copy of SoftImage, and the sound studio was a showcase of sparkly new technology. It was impressive."

The first project assigned to this new studio couldn't have been any more high profile; Sega had secured the *Jurassic Park* licence and was keen to produce a game that demonstrated the Hollywood aspirations of the Mega-CD technology. "The *Jurassic Park* project was a huge priority for Sega, mainly because the association with Steven Spielberg was seen as so important to the PR campaign," recalls Bayless. "Every resource you can imagine was made available. Kathy Kennedy, producer on the film and one of Steven's longest standing collaborators, went way out of her way to help Sega. She opened doors to everything from Phil Tippet's early stop-motion dinosaur studies to concept art from Stan Winston's team to the CG models used for the film. I remember one day this package arrived from Amblin with a cassette tape inside; the only thing on the tape was take after take of Wayne Knight gurgling out his death rattles from the scene with the Dilophosaurs – they really did give us everything." Despite this intense focus, the project endured a torrid development period. "Fast forward about six months and I get this phone call at about 2am from our studio head in Tokyo, who was meeting with the Sega of Japan execs," explains Bayless. "He said, 'I just showed Hayao Nakayama [Sega's CEO at the time] a build of *Jurassic Park*. As of right now, you're in charge of the project. Do whatever you have to do to get it back on the rails.' So I rolled up my sleeves, fired some people and eventually shipped a pretty decent game."

> **"Could Guitar Hero have gone on Mega-CD? Hell yes"** SCOT BAYLESS

As *Jurassic Park* proves, the advent of CD-ROM technology brought with it amazing potential, but there were less welcome side-effects, too. "*Jurassic Park* represented the transition from the small budgets and tiny teams of the old days to something much more expensive and demanding of real production discipline," says Bayless. "When you're building a game that has to fit into a few megabytes of ROM, it's not inconceivable that you can keep the whole project in your head. But when you're making something that requires a dozen CG animators, casting calls,

location shoots, ADR and Foley sessions, you can't afford to do anything without a plan. I remember that before I took over the *Jurassic Park* project, a team went romping off to Hawaii where they hired a steadicam and spent a week running around in the jungle taking hours of video of palm trees whizzing by. If you look at the finished game, maybe a total of two minutes of that footage survived the project. The rest was worthless, but it cost maybe $20K to get it."

Cash continued to be poured into Mega-CD development and for a time hardware sales were encouraging, but by this point Nintendo had stepped up its game and the SNES was rapidly asserting itself in the West. The once insatiable public interest in Sega's CD-based machine began to wane and the previously 'innovative' tech began to appear stale. This process was aided by the fact that one of the console's key selling points – FMV-based gaming – was something of a non-starter. "Sega got way too focused on FMV," admits Bayless. "There was all this talk going around about games converging with movies and Mega-CD being the gateway to that convergence. Suddenly game guys were thinking of themselves as movie makers. But if you really looked at how that translated into an entertainment experience it didn't take a rocket scientist to realise that the things Mega-CD could do well really had very little to do with movies." As the Nineties progressed, rival CD-ROM-based consoles emerged; while they could hardly be classed as tremendous successes themselves, the arrival of the CD-i and 3DO essentially made the Mega-CD technically obsolete. The failure of the machine was followed by the abortive 32X project ("I was present at the inception of 32X and it was literally designed on a cocktail napkin," reveals Bayless with a laugh) and Sega's previously soaring reputation was left in tatters. To say that Sega's slide began with the release of the Mega-CD is probably doing the machine an injustice, but the high-profile collapse of the format certainly didn't help the company's public image.

It's all too easy to be overly negative when looking back on the Mega-CD, but it's often forgotten that the platform boasted some truly brilliant games. Sega's conversion of Capcom's *Final Fight* was a definite highlight, offering all three characters and a two-player mode (both famously absent from the SNES port), and Working Designs localised Japanese RPGs such as *Lunar: The Silver Star*, *Lunar: Eternal Blue* and *Vay*, making themselves heroes with English-speaking Sega fans in the process. But what does Bayless consider to be the best titles for the system? "For polished gameplay, *Sonic CD*, hands down. For the best soundtrack, *Ecco CD*. For the best use of the platform, I'd have to go with Kojima's *Snatcher*."

Plenty of theories have emerged as to why the Mega-CD failed to make a significant impact on the world of videogames; it's been argued that the price was too high, the inability to function without a Mega Drive limited its sales potential and the technology involved simply wasn't powerful enough to convince people to upgrade. Bayless has his own verdict. "What turned out to be problematic was the content," he explains. "Personally I don't think the platform ever really demonstrated successfully what the value proposition was. A few years later Sony very successfully positioned the PS2 as a competitively priced DVD player that also happened to offer a great gaming experience. The Mega-CD might have been able to play a similar gambit but that was never part of the plan. However, there was a deeper issue; it was fundamentally a solution in search of a problem. I remember sitting in lengthy head-scratching sessions – not just at Sega of America but at Sega of Japan as well – where we were saying to each other, 'Great, so now we have a storage system that's 100 times bigger than before. So what?' Worse still, access to all that data was 100 times *slower*. It was a fundamental paradigm shift with almost no thought given to consequences. I honestly don't think anyone at Sega asked the most important question: 'Why?' There's a rule I developed during my time as an engineer in the military aviation business: never fall in love with your tech. I think that's where Mega-CD went off the rails. The whole company fell in love with the idea without ever really asking how it would affect the games you made."

When asked what could have been done to improve the Mega-CD's chances, Bayless recounts an interesting anecdote that is made all the more ironic given the game industry's current preoccupation with music games. "Record producer Todd Rundgren showed up at the studio one day, pitching something that was like the pre-biotic version of *Guitar Hero*," recalls Bayless. "He wasn't all the way there but he was poking in the right direction. Sadly we were all too caught up in our own skewed vision to really understand him or what could have been done with his embryonic ideas. Could *Guitar Hero* have been done on Mega-CD? Hell yes. Would that have transformed the business and saved Mega-CD? Who knows, but I bet it would have made a splash."



LIFE'S A BEACH

Bayless may have been instrumental 'behind the scenes' at Sega of America but thanks to a famous American magazine advert, he also became the visible 'face' of the Mega-CD to many gamers. He was featured on a double-page spread where he extolled the virtues of Sega's latest system, and the promotion was printed in leading US magazines such as *GamePro* and *EGM*. "That shot was taken on Stinson Beach just north of San Francisco," recalls Bayless when questioned about his brush with superstardom. "The agency had hired some very high profile photographer to do the shoot and his vision was to put that wall of TVs in front of the setting sun with me in the foreground. So there we were, on the beach with him on a ladder and the two of us surrounded by a herd of people and gear. The agency guys are there sitting in director's chairs like directors on a movie set. They're moving stuff around, restacking the TVs, testing low angles, testing high angles. They're facing the sun. They're facing away from the sun. They're sending people into the city to buy me clothes because the photographer wants to try out new outfits – I changed about six times during the course of the afternoon with people holding up blankets while I stripped. At the end, the only thing I was wearing that was actually mine was my shoes. Meanwhile, there are all these people walking by on the beach asking if I'm someone famous and, of course, while all this is going on the sun is going down. Finally, they start shooting at like 7pm, but by then the sun was gone. So when it's all done you have a shot they could have done on a sound stage with a couple of buckets full of sand. But hey, for about seven hours I got to be a movie star!"



» *Night Trap* went on to become something of a 'video nasty' and sparked an age rating classification scandal upon its release in the US and Europe.



MEGA-CD



PERFECT TEN GAMES

It's easy to laugh at Sega's Mega-CD, but to do so would be rather foolish. Despite it's poor sales and the numerous problems Sega faced, plenty of great games were available for the system. The following examples are the very best, representing a wide range of different genres. Enjoy.

SONIC CD

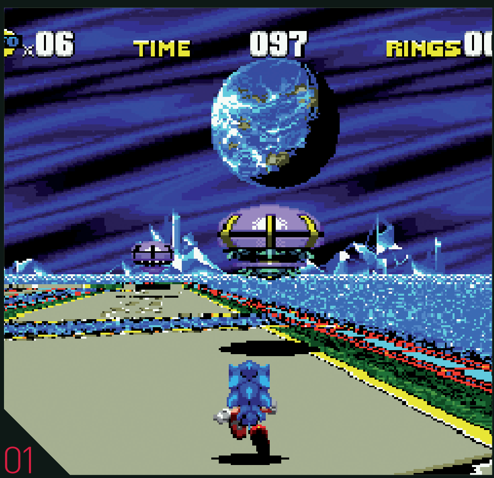
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

01 **Every console needs** a killer app to justify its existence, and *Sonic CD* is as close as you're going to get on the Mega-CD. Regularly cited as one of the best games in the series, this ambitious title made good use of the CD format's storage potential by including gigantic levels, Mode 7 bonus stages and a spectacular soundtrack. The game was made even deeper by the fact it was possible to time-travel forwards and backwards on each level, essentially making the stages three times as big. Interestingly, the US version features a different soundtrack to the Japanese and European variants – although both selections of songs are equally fantastic.

FINAL FIGHT CD

- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **CREATED BY:** SEGA/CAPCOM
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SPIDER-MAN VS. THE KINGPIN

02 **When *Final Fight*** (unquestionably the quintessential arcade hit of the late Eighties) was ported to Nintendo's Super Famicom in 1990, you could practically hear the cries of despair emanating from Sega fans the world over. For a time it seemed as if this Capcom classic would remain exclusive to Nintendo, but thankfully Sega was granted permission to reprogram the game when the Mega-CD came along – it produced what is arguably the best home console conversion (aside from recent emulated ports). *Final Fight CD* is packed with all three characters and all the levels. Needless to say, the previously smug SNES owners were left feeling a little put out.



01

SHINING FORCE CD

- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **CREATED BY:** SONIC SOFTWARE PLANNING
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SHINING FORCE GAIDEN (GAME GEAR)

03 **The only *Shining Force*** game to make its way onto the Mega-CD is a combined remake of the Game Gear releases *Shining Force Gaiden* and *Shining Force Gaiden 2: Sword Of Hajya*. Visually it's not what you could call a massive improvement when compared to the Mega Drive instalments, but the sheer scope of the challenge is almost overwhelming. So epic was the quest that the Mega-CD internal save game RAM wasn't enough to contain all the data; the purchase of a separate RAM cart was essential if you wanted to see everything the game had to offer.

LUNAR: THE SILVER STAR

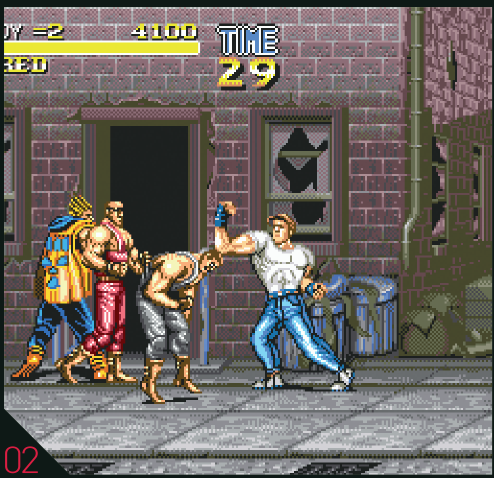
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **PUBLISHER:** WORKING DESIGNS (US)
- **CREATED BY:** GAME ARTS/STUDIO ALEX
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SILPHEED

04 **Game Art's epic** RPG was the closest the Mega-CD ever got to having its own *Final Fantasy*, and following its Japanese release, the console's sales in that region were given a boost. Although the in-game graphics were hardly ground-breaking, they were accompanied by some lush anime sequences and an astounding soundtrack by Noriyuki Iwadare. US firm Working Designs picked *Lunar* up for Western localisation and did a fantastic job – the company later returned to the game when it was remade for the PSone in 1996.

THUNDERHAWK

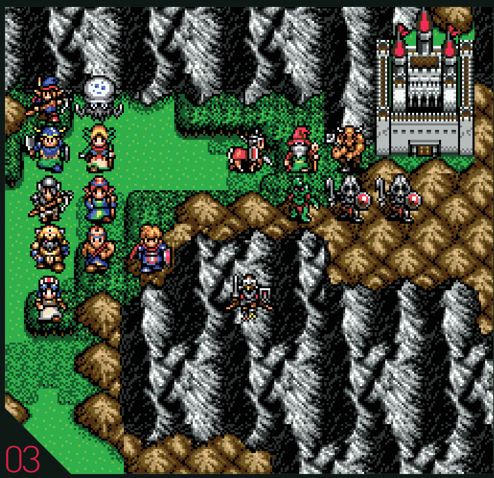
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **PUBLISHER:** CORE DESIGN
- **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
- **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** CHUCK ROCK

05 **UK-based Core** Design was a staunch Sega supporter and produced some of the Mega-CD's finest moments. While games such as *Battlecorps* and *BC Racers* pushed the hardware but fell a little short on enjoyment, *Thunderhawk* was a complete success in both regards. Smooth Mode 7 rotation and scaling was coupled effectively with some of the most frantic action ever witnessed on the format, and the game was rightly praised by the press upon release. A 32-bit sequel followed that added full 3D visuals, but the original remains the one we're most fond of.



02

text box isn't level with the others



03



04



05

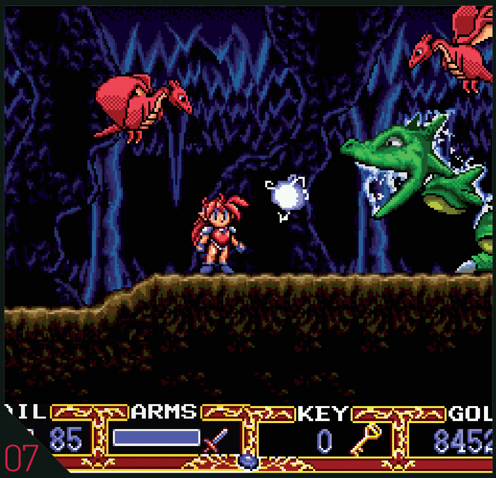
SPECIAL THANKS TO GENERATION-MSX.NL FOR ADDITIONAL SCREENS



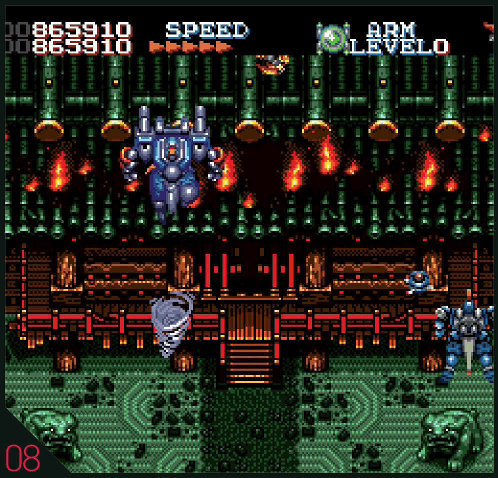




06



07



08

LUNAR: ETERNAL BLUE

» **RELEASED:** 1994 (JAPAN)
» **PUBLISHER:** WORKING DESIGNS (US)
» **CREATED BY:** GAME ARTS/STUDIO ALEX
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** TENKA FUBU

06 **Although it doesn't** attract as much praise as its predecessor, *Lunar: Eternal Blue* is just as enjoyable an RPG experience as *The Silver Star.* Also, despite featuring a new cast of protagonists, the gameplay remains largely unchanged. Again, Working Designs took the plunge and brought this Stateside with a great translation. In both Japan and the US, this was one of the final high-profile pieces of software for the ailing platform; by the time of the American launch the system was all but dead.

POPFUL MAIL

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHER:** WORKING DESIGNS (US)
» **CREATED BY:** FALCOM
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** YS

07 **Originally produced for** the NEC PC-8801 in 1991, this 2D action RPG title shares many similarities with the *Wonderboy: Monster World* series. The player takes on the role of a bounty hunter named Mail, but it's possible to switch to other characters. With the excellent English translation and voice work, the Western version of *Popful Mail* is arguably the best of all the conversions and carries a justifiably inflated price tag when it appears on auction sites today. While we're not fans of unscrupulous game resellers, *Popful Mail* is unquestionably worth paying through the nose for.

ROBO ALESTE

» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **PUBLISHER:** TENGEN
» **CREATED BY:** COMPILE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SHADOWRUN

08 **A spiritual sequel** to the shockingly brilliant Mega Drive shooter *MUSHA Aleste*, *Robo Aleste* featured the same fixation with large mecha as its predecessor, but was unique because it placed these mechanical killing machines in feudal Japan. Although the gameplay doesn't really present any ideas that couldn't have been achieved on the good old Mega Drive, the music and cut-scenes genuinely elevate the game to a new level of greatness. The game saw release in all three key territories and is in high demand thanks to its overall quality.



09

SNATCHER

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** LETHAL ENFORCERS

09 **It's ironic that** while many developers wrestled in vain with grainy, low quality FMV to create the ultimate interactive movie, *Metal Gear* creator Hideo Kojima succeeded where others had failed – by using traditional hand-drawn 2D visuals. Showcasing a plot that owes more than little debt to the likes of Hollywood movies such as *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator, Snatcher* remains one of Kojima's most beloved works. It was also released on the PC Engine CD-ROM, PlayStation and Saturn, but the Mega-CD outing remains the only version to be officially translated into English. This makes it a highly sought-after title. You need this game, but your bank balance won't thank you.

KEIO FLYING SQUADRON

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHER:** JVC/VICTOR
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** FUNKY HORROR BAND

10 **The Mega Drive** and Mega-CD were never gifted with a conversion of Konami's deliriously playable *Parodius*, but JVC's *Keio Flying Squadron* is a perfectly acceptable substitute. Putting the player in the high-heeled shoes of a girl dressed in what looks like a Playboy bunny outfit, *Keio* boasts a similar style of horizontally scrolling wackiness and puts the Mega-CD hardware to good use to produce some excellent cut-scenes and a brilliant CD-quality soundtrack. A Saturn sequel followed in 1996 that added 2D platforming sections, but for pure shooting brilliance the Mega-CD original is where it's at. A relatively late release, the PAL version of *Keio* is common and reasonably priced.



10



MEGA-CD and the rest...

FMV flop or 16-bit wonder? Regardless of your viewpoint Sega's Mega-CD still has plenty of games that are worth seeking out. Here are some of the best and worst



01 SAMURAI SHODOWN
02 ECCO THE DOLPHIN: THE TIDES OF TIME
03 BRUTAL: PAWS OF FURY
04 HEART OF THE ALIEN
05 MORTAL KOMBAT
06 SPACE ACE
07 AFTER BURNER III
08 EARTHWORM JIM: SPECIAL EDITION
09 FLASHBACK: THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY
10 PRINCE OF PERSIA
11 SEWER SHARK
12 EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
13 THE ADVENTURES OF WILLY BEAMISH
14 LETHAL ENFORCERS
15 ROAD AVENGER
16 JAGUAR XJ220
17 BATMAN RETURNS
18 COBRA COMMAND
19 HEIMDALL
20 PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE
21 SHADOW OF THE BEAST II
22 IRON HELIX
23 CHUCK ROCK
24 THE NINJA WARRIORS
25 WILD WOODY
26 BLACK HOLE ASSAULT
27 DOUBLE SWITCH
28 FATAL FURY SPECIAL
29 FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
30 MICROCOSM
31 SILPHEED
32 HOOK
33 GROUND ZERO TEXAS
34 TOMCAT ALLEY
35 NIGHT TRAP
36 BC RACERS
37 CRIME PATROL
38 JURASSIC PARK
39 NBA JAM
40 BATTLECORPS
41 RACING ACES
42 SENSIBLE SOCCER
43 WINDS OF THUNDER
44 ETERNAL CHAMPIONS
45 CITIZEN X
46 WHO SHOT JOHNNY ROCK?
47 STAR WARS: REBEL ASSAULT
48 DUNGEON MASTER II: SKULLKEEP
49 MAD DOG MCCREE
50 THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
51 DARK WIZARD
52 SOL-FEACE
53 THE LAWNMOWER MAN
54 WOLFCHILD
55 BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA
56 SOULSTAR


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05
SCORPION
355000
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SONYA
PRESS START
06
STAGE 01
SCORE 000071250
HIT 000
07
ENERGY 25806
SCORE 000585
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FIGHTER
THIEF
MAGE
CLERIC
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12
WILLY
1. I dunno, Ms. Glass.
2. I've got something stuck in my ear. Could you repeat that?
3. We can all go home now.
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DANGER !
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001600
×2
×35
×01
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100%
SCORE 0000000
POWER FLY
PAN × 2
TIME 4:49
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26
ENEMY
ALEX
CAPTURED
FIREPLACE
WINDOW
27
P1
1100
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PUSH START
RYO SAKAZAKI
BIG BEAR
28
TEXAS
HOTEL WINDOW
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3:00
BLEU
ENTREE
Possible 12
Capturés 5
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TURBO
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PILOTS
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ACCESSING CYBERJOBE MEMORY BANKS
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IMPORT ONLY



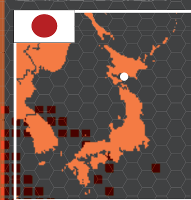
INFO



- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
- » **ALSO ON:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE (JAPAN)
- » **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £20

» **CO-ORDINATES:** 35°41' N 139°46' E

GAME ORIGIN

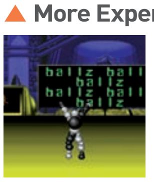


- » **COUNTRY:** JAPAN
- » **POPULATION:** 127,433,494
- » **CAPITAL:** TOKYO
- » **NATIONAL LANGUAGE:** JAPANESE
- » **CURRENCY:** YEN
- » **TIME ZONE:** GMT +9

PRICE WATCH

» **Similar titles to splash cash on**

▲ More Expensive Than

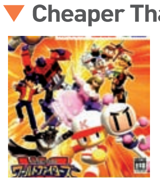


BALLZ

GET IT FOR: **£5+**

While not a patch on *Joy Mecha Fight*, Accolade's *Ballz* – a 16-bit jump into the realm of faux 3D bauble fighting – still remains one of its closest and cheapest Western contemporaries. Although its 2.5 perspective and spherical combatants do give the game a certain charm, the button bashing mentality of its gameplay serves as a rather nasty fly in the ointment.

▼ Cheaper Than



DREAM MIX TV: WORLD FIGHTERS

GET IT FOR: **£30+**

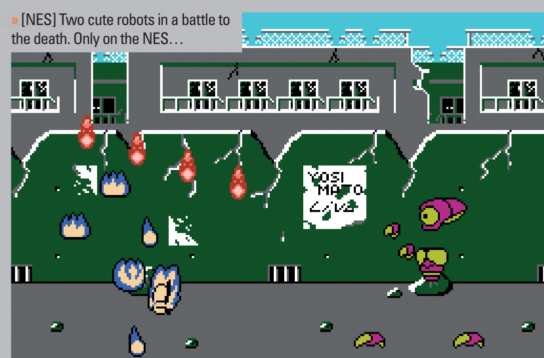
This bizarre *Super Smash Bros.* clone is actually quite an enjoyable, albeit bizarre, fighting game. The premise finds well-known toy and game characters fighting at the behest of flapping TV execs seeing drops in their viewing figures. Ever wondered who would win in a fight between Master Higgins and Megatron? Here's your chance to find out.

JOY MECHA FIGHT

» Nintendo had dipped its toe in the fighting arena a few times before Super Smash Bros. Most aren't really worth your time – except for one, that is: Joy Mecha Fight. It played out like Robot Wars on acid

The lovable old NES isn't really renowned for great one-on-one fighting games. In fact the machine actually hosts two of the worst ever conceived: *Street Fighter 2010: The Final Fight*, which turns Ken Masters (in the Western release, anyway) into a scientist in a robotic spacesuit, and pits him against cyborgs, man-eating plants and dragons in outer space, and *Urban Champion* – Nintendo's first stab at the genre, which has the type of one-note gameplay that makes lightgun games feel like MMORPGs.

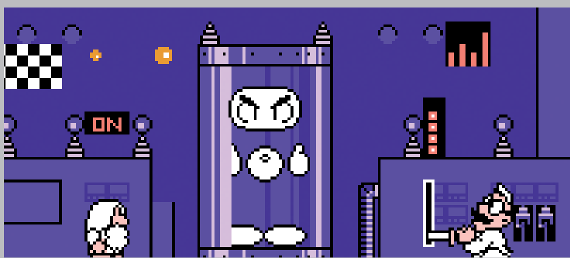
However, around the time that Nintendo was gearing up for the release of the Super Famicom in Japan, two designers, Koichi Hayashida and Kouichiro Eto, would meet at a programming seminar hosted by Nintendo and change that bit of history forever. Released towards the later end of the NES's commercial life (although Nintendo wouldn't actually pull the plug on the machine until almost a decade later), *Joy Mecha Fight* is a game that really showcases the very best of the Nintendo's grey little toaster. The graphics are truly a thing of beauty, even managing to give the colourful, and more tech savvy, SMS a run for its money. With a wonderful cartoon intro into the game, showing the type of lunacy that's in store for owners of this brilliant game, the glorious beat-'em-up action begins. Greeting you is a cast of eight giant cartoon robots (an unusual departure from the NES's stubby character sprites) and some lavish and colourful-looking stages that blow the cream of visual finesse on the system out of the water.



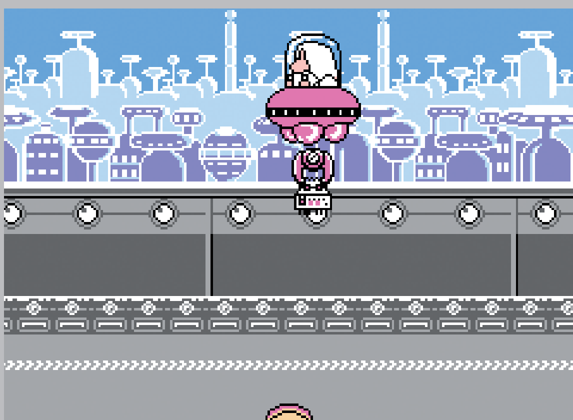
» [NES] Two cute robots in a battle to the death. Only on the NES…

Joy Mecha Fight is a fighting game with loose *Street Fighter 2* overtones (unsurprising given the game was very popular at the time) starring a quirky cast of limbless robots. Think of Accolades' *Ballz* but with the classic aesthetics of *Mega Man* – *Joy Mecha Fight* adopts a similar technique to its animation. To give the impression of fluidity Nintendo cleverly made the characters in the game limbless, and made their hands and feet look like they were floating in the air. By not being connected by a body the limbs become individual sprite clusters that move independently. While this style has a tendency to make the fighting feel a little airy – given that beat-'em-ups rely on sharp collision detection – persevere and you will soon settle into the game.

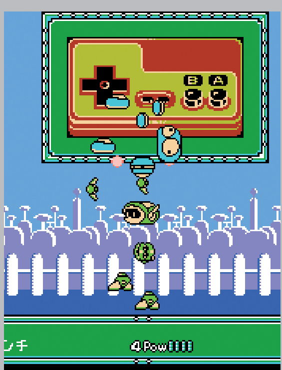




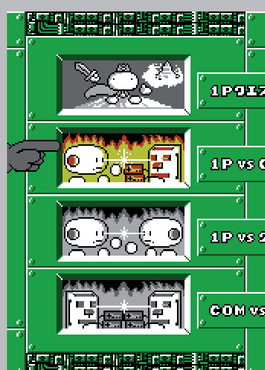
» [NES] So that's where all limbless robots come from!



» [NES] Is this what God would look like if he appeared in a NES game?



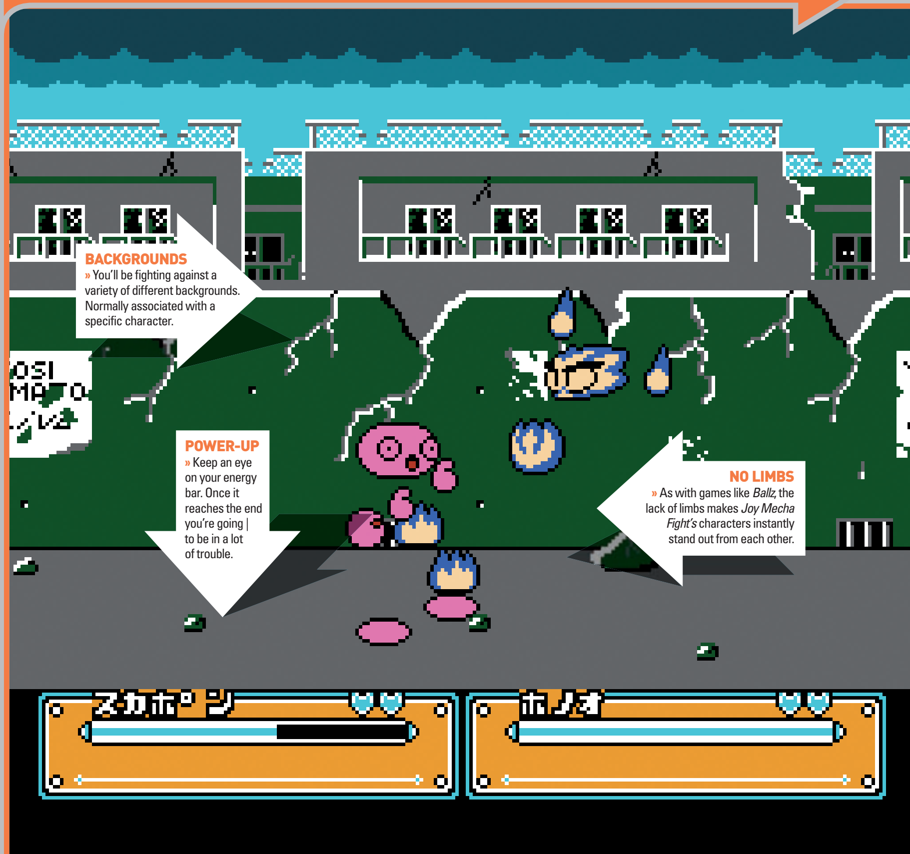
» [NES] Luckily, being fluent in Japanese isn't necessary in order to enjoy *Joy Mecha Fight*.



» [NES] There's a variety of different options to choose from. Handily all in English.

GO DEEPER

What to look for when playing Joy Mecha Fight



"NES owners who are currently eyeing up this baby needn't fret as this game is import friendly"

SEE, YOU'VE NO REASON NOT TO BUY IT

While *Joy Mecha Fight* never found its way off of Eastern shores, NES owners who are currently eyeing up this baby needn't fret as the game is import friendly. While never officially localised (although a quick Google search reveals that some dedicated fans of the game have gone to the trouble of making a translation patch for the game), *Joy Mecha Fight* is relatively easy to get to grips with. With a wonderfully simple pictorial menu screen to work, there's certainly no need to learn Japanese or fumble around with the in-game dials like a space chimp in a combat fighter. That's a good thing too as the game contains plenty of game modes and functions.

Joy Mecha Fight features a standard 'versus' mode (single and multiplayer) and a story mode where the characters you beat become yours to play in subsequent rounds. Those who invest the time to explore every aspect of the game will discover *Joy Mecha Fight* features a colossal 36 characters – yes 36 – meaning that for a long time it held the record for having the largest character roster of any fighting game ever. If that wasn't impressive enough, *Joy* also came packed with a *Tekken*-style in-game move list to ease you into the controls. While you might see that as a tad excessive, given that the NES controller only has two buttons, you'd be mistaken. *Joy Mecha Fight* contains an impressive selection of moves, and even finds time to add a few covert move variants too. There's also an attack system that enables you to influence the power of projectile attacks by tapping the Fire button as it connects with your opponent. No fighting game (circa 1991) worth its salt would be without some kind of Dragon Punch and Fireball attack, and *Joy Mecha Fight* has that sorted too. Incidentally, so popular was the game's two-button control scheme that Nintendo would later wholesale it across – albeit tweaked a bit – to its popular *Super Smash Bros.* series.



It's a real shame that *Joy Mecha Fight* never found its way to our shores as it's one of the most polished and accomplished 8-bit beat-'em-up ever produced. *Joy* certainly a game that every NES fan should take time out to experience. Sadly these screenshots don't really do the game any justice. You really need to see it in action to appreciate it. While it might star a cast of giant and clunky-looking combatants, *Joy Mecha Fight* is anything but.

CAN'T IMPORT? YOU COULD TRY

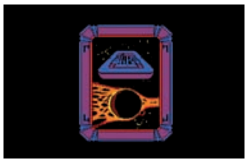


SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL

» This is a series that gets better with each new game. *Super Smash Bros. Brawl* is the king of annoyingly adorable beat-'em-ups. Crammed full of characters, stages, music tracks and trophies, plus a bevy of match customisation and modes for Wii owners to really sink their teeth into, *Super Smash Bros. Brawl* feels wonderfully slick throughout. Add to that the sheer care and attention that's been blessed to every part of the game, plus its wonderfully simple but deep controls system, and the results are staggering. Simply brilliant.

ALIEN 8

TRYING NOT TO ALIENATE THE FANS



- » **PUBLISHER:** ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE ADVENTURE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** AMSTRAD CPC
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5



HISTORY

If there is one thing gamers learnt in the Eighties – primarily due to the bind of cassette loading – it was the virtues of patience; that good things will eventually come to all men (and women, of course) who hang on tightly for so long that blisters appear on the palms of their hands.

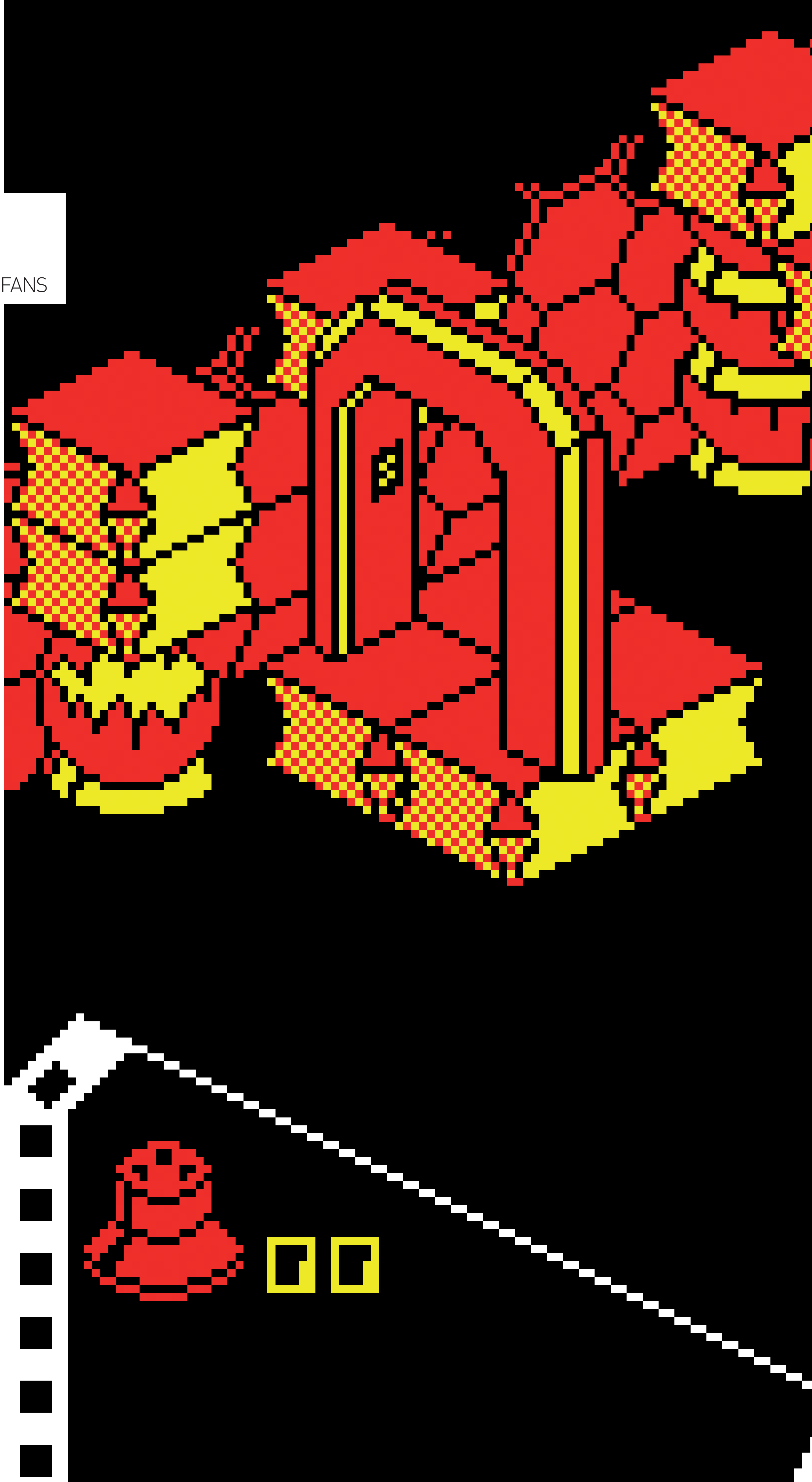
So it proved with *Alien 8*, an Ultimate title made by the formidable Tim and Chris Stamper, with advertisements for the game appearing well before it was released. Given that it was a follow-up to the revolutionary *Knight Lore*, there was much hope that this would scale such heights as to maybe redefine isometric gaming so soon into its lifespan. Having to wait even a day longer than necessary was agony.

Initially, however, there was disappointment. It may have had perfect 3D colour graphics (on the CPC at least – f'nar), a huge addictive playing area and many mind/joystick bending puzzles, but sulking gamers felt it was too similar to *Knight Lore* in both gameplay and looks. The uncharitable sorts assumed it was merely *Knight Lore* in space, given our cute hero, Alien 8, was a robot.

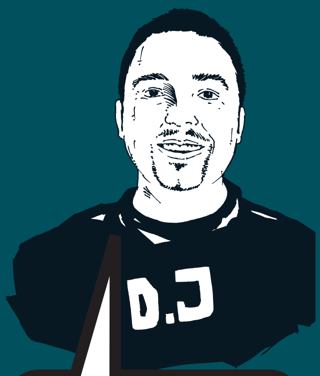
And yet *Alien 8* was a serious test of a player's arcade reflexes, requiring a healthy dose of lateral thinking to solve the puzzles essential to the collection of the game's vital valves. Criticism of the title thus soon subsided and gamers actually began to find *Alien 8* more playable than the mould-breaking *Knight Lore* that preceded it.

Despite the crap sound and the slowdown, there was enough in *Alien 8* to a ensure a richly rewarding experience for those who persevered in collecting and returning the circuits needed in order for the biological crew to survive.

Here you had to attempt to activate 132 cryonaughts aboard a spaceship before reaching a distant planet within a 40-day time limit. And with more than enough clockwork mice, alien egg shells and pyramid spikes to avoid as you travelled in each isometric flip-screen room, it was difficult and challenging straight away – yet purely addictive. It remains so today.

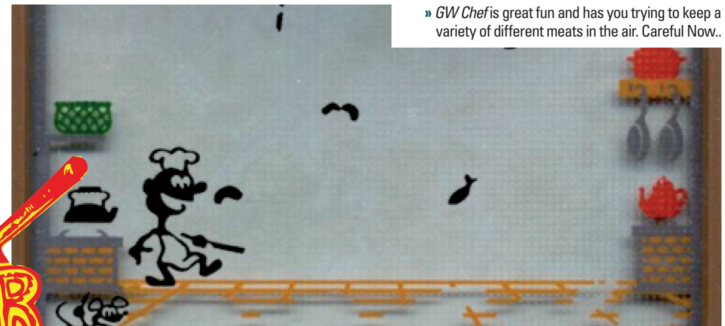



5954
03
LIGHT YEARS



Now that we've finally managed to get our hands on an iPhone, we've been overwhelmed by the sheer amount of great retro inspired titles that are available for it. Here, then, for your pleasure is a huge range of the best (and worst) games that are currently available on the system.





» *GW Chef* is great fun and has you trying to keep a variety of different meats in the air. Careful Now..

retro GAMER SIZZLER

INFORMATION
» **PUBLISHER:** MOBILE 1UP
» **COST:** FREE - £1.19



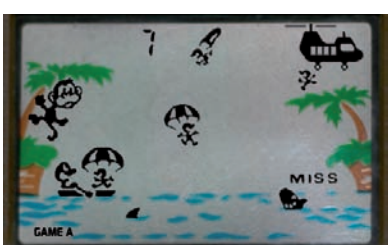
» Easily the greatest GW game we've played. *GW Octopus* is nostalgia heaven.



GW SERIES

Nintendo's Game & Watch series, as we revealed in issue (55), are huge collector items in their native form, with certain editions often costing hundreds of pounds if you're able to track them down. Immediately playable thanks to their simplistic gameplay, yet so addictive they should come with government health warnings, the devices have already outlived their creator and show no sign of disappearing, with the Japanese side of Nintendo releasing exclusive DS variants for special Nintendo members.

So imagine how surprised we were to discover five amazingly authentic unofficial remakes (with a sixth, *GW Egg* on the way) on the iTunes App store. Rather than review the five available games separately, we've decided to cover them all here, simply because they're all identical in terms of execution and style and are all as good and addictive as each other.



The five games currently available are *GW Helmet*, *GW Fire*, *GW Octopus*, *GW Chef* and *GW Parachute*. Unsurprisingly they're virtually identical copies – we couldn't tell any major differences between them – of the original Game & Watch variations. *GW Helmet* sees you running across a building site while avoiding falling tools; *Fire* has you controlling a pair of fireman who must bounce the survivors of a flaming building; while *Chef* has you juggling falling food. The final two are *Parachute*, similar to *Fire* but you use a boat to catch parachuting men, and the excellent *Octopus* that has you controlling an intrepid diver collecting treasure while avoiding a dangerous octopus.

All five versions can be controlled in exactly the same way: you can either tilt the iPhone in the direction you wish to move, tap a position for your on-screen character to move to, or tap the left or right-hand side of the screen. The final control method is by far the best – tilting just isn't responsive enough, especially on later stages – although we found that the Tap Position to be fairly good as well, although it takes a fair amount of practice to successfully use. It's worth noting that these ports aren't entirely accurate, as none of them feature the alarm settings of the original machines, but let's face it, that's hardly important. No, what's important here is that the effortlessly easy controls of the originals have been maintained and we're pleased to announce that Aaron's efforts are nothing less than superb.

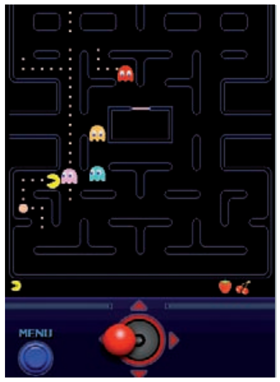
Gameplay wise, the five available titles are as addictive as they ever were, with each version offering the two difficulty modes that could be found on the original games. *Helmet* is perhaps the weakest game on offer, but the others are pure gold, with *Octopus* and *Fire* in particular firing up the old nostalgia glands. With these being simple score attack games at heart, it should come as no surprise to learn that all five have online leaderboards enabling you to track your scores and keep tabs on other players.

Perhaps the best aspect of the *GW* series is the low price. *GW Helmet* is available to download for free, while the other titles cost just £1.19 each, meaning that you can have hours of entertainment for less than a fiver.

It remains to be seen how long the *GW* series will be available for, so your download these excellent remakes as quickly as you can.

92%







PAC-MAN

INFORMATION
» **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO
» **COST:** £3.49

Pac-Man is one of the most famous franchises of all time, so it's little wonder that it was one of the first iPhone games that Namco has ported to Apple's new system. What is surprising, though, is just how well it has actually turned out.

Like many iPhone games, Pac-Man can be controlled in a variety of ways: you can either use the on-screen joystick, tilt the iPhone in whatever direction you want the yellow muncher to move, or simply change his direction with a simple swipe of your finger. All three options are more than adequate, although we found the tilt and swiping methods to be the most effective, mainly because they just feel more natural.

Unlike *Pole Position: Remixed*, Namco hasn't added anything new to the core *Pac-Man* formulae, so don't expect to find new maze layouts, additional game modes or even online scoreboards. What you have here is good old-fashioned *Pac-Man* and while it's as playable as ever, is not quite as good value for money as Namco's excellent iPhone remake of *Ms Pac-Man*. The price is certainly appealing, but it's really hard to recommend when *Ms Pac-Man* is little more than a download away.

80%

> "Good old-fashioned Pac-Man and it's as playable as ever"



FISH TYCOON

» **PUBLISHER:** LAST DAY AT WORK
» **COST:** £1.19

At time of writing we've put roughly 30 hours into this delightful little sim game; if that's not value for money, then you may as well give up with the iPhone right now. A sim management title at heart, the main goal of *Fish Tycoon* is to discover seven magical fish by cross-breeding the ones you already have. Brilliantly diverting – it's set in real-time – if a little too easy, *Fish Tycoon* represents some of the best value for money that we've ever seen.

80%

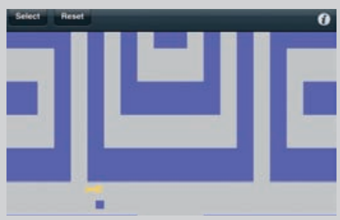
ASPHALT 4: ELITE RACING

» **PUBLISHER:** GAMELOFT
» **COST:** £3.49

Asphalt 4 looks absolutely sensational, but it comes at a price. The frame-rate sometimes gets rather jerky – even when our iPhone has had a hard reset – which in turn occasionally impacts on the rather sensitive control methods used. Surprisingly, tilting to steer works really well and there's an amazing amount of gameplay packed into this glorious looking racer. A fun, solid racer, it's just a shame the gameplay can't match the great visuals.

77%





ADVENTURE

» **PUBLISHER:** PETER HIRSCHBERG
» **COST:** FREE

We're not too sure about the legal ramifications behind this, but we're glad that Hirschberg has ported Warren Robinett's classic action-adventure to the iPhone. Movement is handled by tilt controls (although it's a little fiddly) while the picking up and dropping of items is handled by simply touching the screen; otherwise this is nigh-on identical to the 1979 original. Still worryingly addictive, even after three decades, the ability to download *Adventure* for free is definitely not to be sniffed at. An essential download.

85%

I LOVE KATAMARI

» **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO
» **COST:** £4.99

The iPhone's tilt controls seemingly make it the perfect vehicle for Namco's popular roll-'em-up, but sadly it doesn't quite work as well as we'd hoped. Controls are nowhere near as responsive as they could be and while the nutty music is as delightful as ever, you'll find yourself struggling with the finicky controls. Slowdown can also be an issue, with the on-screen action taking a significant hit as your Katamari grows in size. Let's hope an update sorts this out as the potential is obvious to see.

58%







POLE POSITION: REMIX

INFORMATION
» **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO
» **COST:** £3.99

We've looked at a variety of different iPhone driving games over the past few months and many of them sadly suffer from the same problems. They're either far too complicated for their own good, or they tend to get let down by their rather poor controls.

Luckily, Namco's re-imagination of its 1982 racer is far better and proves that there's still plenty of life in the 27-year-old franchise. There are a variety of control methods ranging from tilting the iPhone to using a wheel and a slider (the latter being our personal favourite method) while acceleration can be handled automatically, leaving you to just tap the brake button whenever you want to slow down.

More a game about dodging other vehicles as opposed to flat out racing, *Pole Position: Remix* nevertheless features several game modes – including a cool Sudden Death option – and funky aesthetics that easily capture the spirit and styling of the 1982 original. Instantly accessible yet hard to put down, *Pole Position: Remix* is a great re-imagination of a classic arcade game. More please.

83%

FIELDRUNNERS

INFORMATION
» **PUBLISHER:** SUBATOMIC STUDIOS
» **COST:** £2.99

Recommending Fieldrunners is something of a tricky prospect. On the one hand, it's arguably the most addictive tower defence game on the iPhone; on the other its two available maps – as excellent as they are – don't represent amazing value for money.

Despite its limited game modes and lack of maps (although Subatomic has promised that more are on the way very soon), *Fieldrunners* remains a polished product and it's been put together with so much care that it's difficult to dislike.

As with all tower defence games, the premise is simple: you have a limited amount of cash to construct towers (built by dragging them onto the arena) and must shoot down a wave of enemies before they reach the available exit. Shot enemies reward you with cash that can then be used to build new towers or enhance existing ones and as the waves progress, the approaching enemies become stronger and more diverse, ranging from weak foot soldiers to huge hulking behemoths.

Fieldrunners excels thanks to a selection of well-designed foes, a brilliantly crafted difficulty level, a solid range of weapons (everything from machine guns to lasers) and exceptional cartoony visuals. The lack of maps is a real issue, but this is still one of the best examples of the genre that you're ever likely to play.

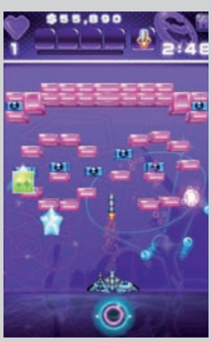
88%





BLOCK BREAKER 2 DELUXE

» **PUBLISHER:** GAMELOFT
» **COST:** £1.19



Arkanoid clones are rife on the iPhone so you need to do what you can to make yours stand tall. Gameloft delivers an attractive price, varied game modes, but nearly mucks it all up by featuring a selection of bland characters that you need to battle against. Ignore this, however, and you'll find a great take on the genre that features colourful visuals, cool power-ups, responsive controls and a variety of different game modes. Well worth a punt.

80%

BUBBLE BASH

» **PUBLISHER:** GAMELOFT
» **COST:** £1.19



Don't be put off by the horrendous, sickeningly cute visuals in *Bubble Bash*, this is Taito's *Bust-A-Move* in all but name and bloody good it is too. Gameloft has improved somewhat on the original concept, however, by adding a variety of different mini-games that range from shooting down birds to clearing a group of bubbles before your platform reaches them. Add in some extremely responsive controls, rather catchy tunes, 100 levels, and an excellent price point and *Bubble Bash* will keep you entertained for hours. If only it didn't look so nauseatingly cute…

88%

BALLZUP

» **PUBLISHER:** TOUCHY TOY STUFF
» **COST:** £2.39



Don't be fooled by *BallZup*. While it might look ugly and lack the polished presentation of some of its peers, it's still a great *Arkanoid* clone. In fact, one of its biggest bonuses is the addition of stars that drop down when bricks are defeated. Collect these to increase your final score multiplier. It's an ingenious touch that instantly appeals to the score attack whore within us and easily makes up for the meagre amount of weapons and drab visuals. If only there were online leaderboards, too.

70%

MS PAC-MAN

» **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO
» **COST:** £3.49



If you're a fan of *Pac-Man* then make sure you download this excellent sequel, too. Boasting the same solid controls that work so well on the original *Pac-Man*, the 1981 follow-up is superior due to far more challenging ghosts, the need to now chase after fruit, and a selection of different, well-designed mazes to navigate around. Again, as with *Pac-Man*, it's somewhat disappointing that no new additions or online scoreboards have been made available, but this is nevertheless a fantastic port that really begs to be downloaded straight away.

89%



RAINBOW RUFFLE

» **PUBLISHER:** POWERHOUSE GAMES
» **COST:** £1.19

While we've not yet discovered a version of *Pipe Mania* on the iPhone, we did stumble across this variation from Powerhouse Games. The screen fills with rainbow segments, which you have to link together to form solid loops. Once linked they'll disappear. It's a simple, yet addictive concept that's sadly let down by poor controls that don't always pick up the rainbow pieces you're trying to manipulate. It's a real pity as the concept is excellent; it just needs a decent update or bigger rainbow pieces.

48%

MISSILE COMMAND

» **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
» **COST:** £2.99

Surely the iPhone was made for *Missile Command*? The age-old game of defending cities from incoming missiles is enhanced thanks to the ease of use that the touch screen offers, although this does tend to make the game a little easier. Controls are very responsive, two versions of the game are included and it's now possible to launch multiple missiles. All in all this is an exceptionally solid update and quite possibly the best version we've played outside of the arcades.

90%





CHOPPER

» **PUBLISHER:** MAJIC JUNGLE SOFTWARE
» **COST:** £2.99

There's some solid *Choplifter* clones available on the iPhone but this effort from David Frampton is our favourite. Tight, responsive touch and tilt controls, solid visuals and well-designed maps all combine together to create some tense gameplay that's as addictive as hell. The first couple of levels are a little too easy, but crank it to a higher setting and it becomes far more challenging. A multiplayer mode might have added a little spice, but it's hard to see how this could otherwise be improved.

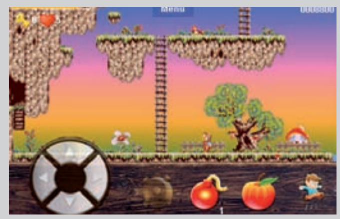
85%

NICKY BOOM

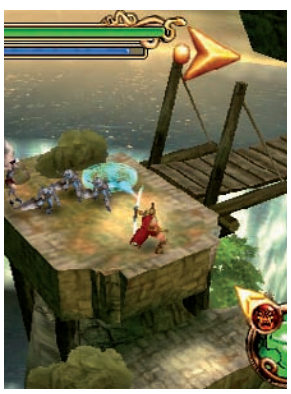
» **PUBLISHER:** CHILLINGO LTD
» **COST:** 59p

The biggest accomplishment of *Nicky Boom* is that he paves the way for future Amiga games to appear on Apple's system. Sadly, that's the only thing this woefully average platformer has going for it. It's easy enough to control thanks to a variety of easy to access symbols, but *Nicky Boom*'s gameplay is so bland and derivative, its solid controls just won't matter. You could argue that it's well worth looking at for just 59 pence, but so are plenty of other apps. Save your cash for something more worthy than this.

57%







HERO OF SPARTA

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** GAMELOFT
» **COST:** £3.49

Hero Of Sparta is the finest looking iPhone game that we've so far played. Beautifully animated, lush environments, huge, imposing looking bosses – it really is a stunning looking game that only begins to chug along like an old-aged pensioner when the screen starts filling up with multiple enemies.

Gameplay is also deep and while it won't take you long to complete (just over two hours) there's plenty of variety packed into the eight levels to ensure that Argos's quest never gets boring.

Hero Of Sparta's controls are also strong, with you utilising a virtual analogue stick and buttons to move around and pull off everything from sword swipes to defensive rolls. You occasionally lose control when your thumb slides too far off the stick, but this doesn't happen enough to be a real concern and it's one of the best examples of a virtual stick we've seen.

It may be a shameless rip-off of Sony's *God Of War* but don't let that put you off. Beneath the glossy sheen is an old-school scrolling fighter that pushes all the right buttons. Even if you can't actually feel them…

84%

STAR TRIGON

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO
» **COST:** £3.49

Namco is really pushing its iPhone support and this effort starring Mr Driller is a real doozy. As with many of the titles by more established companies like EA and Gameloft, presentation throughout is faultless and the overall package feels more like something you'd get on the DS and not an unfinished product desperately in need of an update.

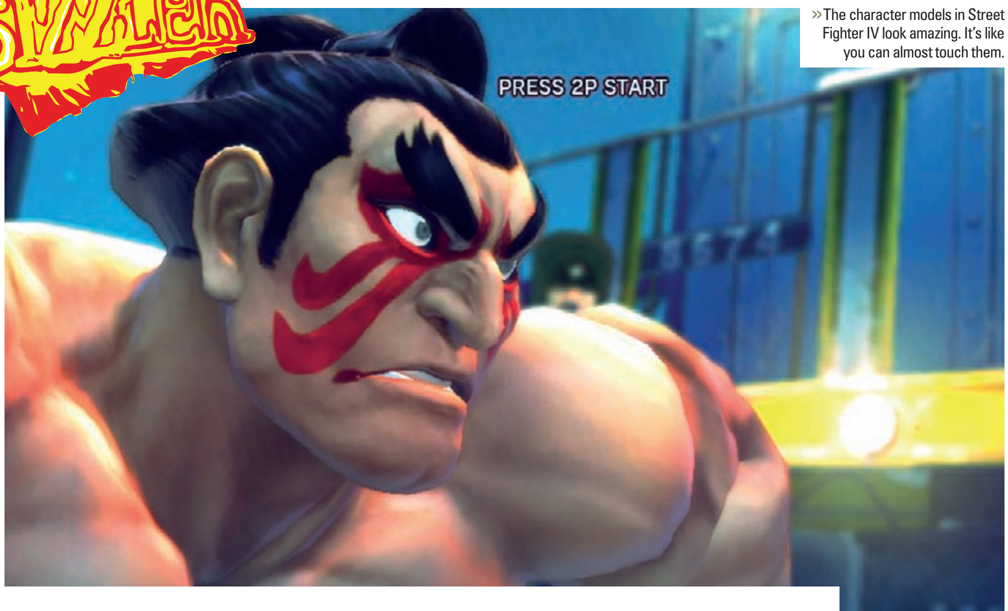
Gameplay-wise, *Star Trigon* is effortlessly simple – as all good puzzle games should be – but it also offers a surprising amount of depth, with later levels really causing you to strain the old noodle. Each stage consists of several planets and a number of cute Uchujins that need to be rescued within a strict time limit. Your character continually runs around a planet's diameter and a touch of the screen will launch him forwards. Get him to land on another planet and you'll immediately form a link; once you've successfully linked three planets into a trigon (triangle), you'll rescue any Uchujins found within it. Care must be taken, however, for if a leap is mistimed you'll simply bounce off a barrier instead. Hit this too many times and you'll fly off into deep space and lose a precious life.



Wonderfully accessible, but offering plenty of depth on later stages due to tricky planet layouts, *Star Trigon* is an excellent little puzzler that offers excellent audio, vibrant visuals and excellent use of the touch screen. The lack of competitive play and online scoreboards is a bit off-putting, but this is solid stuff and well worth its £3.49 asking price.

87%

» STREET FIGHTER IV



» The character models in Street Fighter IV look amazing. It's like you can almost touch them.

INFORMATION
- **SYSTEM:** PS3, XBOX 360, PC
- **PRICE:** £49.99
- **RELEASED:** 20 FEB
- **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2



STREET FIGHTER IV

THE BEST JUST GOT BETTER



» *Street Fighter IV*'s visuals are truly astonishing and let you see the impact of every punch.

This is everything we hoped it would be; the 3D direction we prayed Capcom would take the series. This is not only the greatest fighting game we've played in the last decade; it's one of the greatest fighting games period – even with a few niggling issues, which we'll come to in a bit.

Firstly let's talk about that move to 3D. While it's true that *Street Fighter IV* uses 3D models for the fighters and its backgrounds, the camera and fight-perspective is certainly from the old-school beat-'em-up persuasion. It stays strong, solid and centred, and doesn't barrel-roll around the fighters to simply show off their graphic splendour. The action is equally more considered than most 3D fighting games, which gives each round enough time to cultivate, and really play-out. The visuals in the game have a wonderful bright, arcade aesthetic to them, and the character models feels solid, bright and certainly not tired or careworn, with punches and kicks feeling suitably damaging thanks to the overblown expressions on the characters' faces every time they get the wind smashed out of them.

The core gameplay has always felt wonderfully accessible, but never quite to this level. The game will feel like an open book to newcomers and *The Art Of War* to *Street Fighter 2* veterans. This rings true most notably for the all-new Focus Attacks – a three phase parry/attack that alters in potency according to how long you hold down the medium kick and punch buttons. Add to this the EX Moves, Super Combos and Ultra Combos, which are equally easy to pull off (most simply involved holding down two or three punch or kick buttons, or performing special moves twice) and here you have a *Street Fighter* game that really looks to put everyone back on a level(ish) playing field.

There are a total of 25 characters in the game, and 4 new characters: Abel is a wonderfully strong and devastating fighter (in the right hands) who looks set to slot brilliantly into the franchise; Rufus, despite his gelatinous appearance, is actually surprisingly powerful and swift footed; El Fuerte (while amazing to watch) feels the hardest new character to get to grips with; and Crimson Viper, sadly (confirming our fears), looks and feels a little out of place.

So what about those niggles? Well the loading times we experienced between bouts were noticeably lengthy – although we were playing the PS3 version and there's a strong chance that the launch version may offer an install option to circumvent the problem. Also we suspect that many people will be left jaded by the final boss, Seth. Taking on the appearance of a steroid-pumped member of the Blue Man Group, this final boss is amazingly cheap (his moves seem to always overpower yours) and lazily borrows everyone else's move repertoires. We felt Seth a pretty uninspired finale to a game that certainly deserved better but don't let that put you off buying the game, though; it's worth whatever the asking price.

98%



OPINION

When I was first in the presence of the Street Fighter IV arcade machine that Capcom's Leo Tan kindly brought into the office, I knew I was standing before a truly remarkable beat-'em-up. Now that I've managed to put some extensive time into the PS3 outing I can safely confirm that it's the best fighter I've ever played, easily knocking Third Strike and Garou: Mark of the Wolves from their previously comfy perches. Will this accolade remain forever? Probably not, but everyone - Capcom included - is going to have to come up with something really bloody special in order to top this.

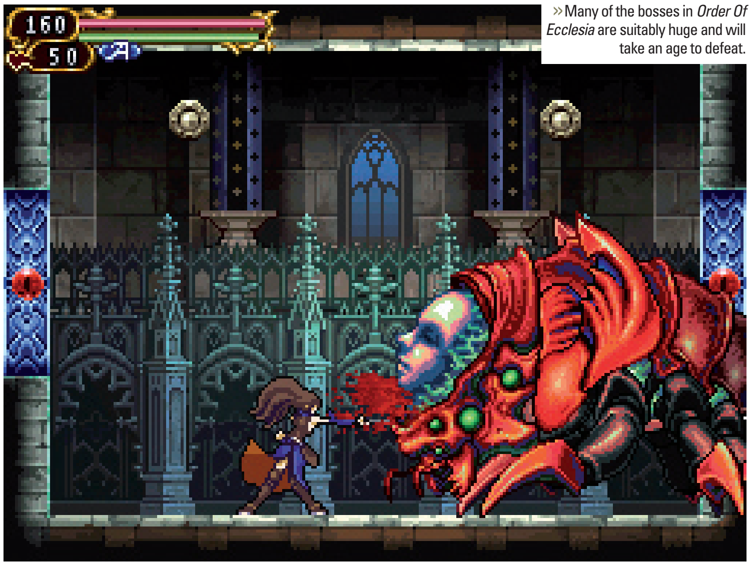
Darran Jones

ONE ORDER THAT YOU WILL DEFINITELY WANT TO BE A PART OF

INFORMATION

- **SYSTEM:** DS
- **PRICE:** £29.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2





» Many of the bosses in *Order Of Ecclesia* are suitably huge and will take an age to defeat.



CASTLEVANIA: ORDER OF ECCLESIA



Konami's *Castlevania: Portrait Of Ruin* marked a substantial, and in some respects, exciting change for the 23-year-old franchise. So we were hoping that these modifications would continue for *Order Of Ecclesia*.

Sadly that's not the case – but don't let that put you off, as you'll be missing out on a real treat. The huge single castle (a stalwart part of the series since *Symphony Of The Night*), the exciting two-player mechanics, the huge amount of weapons to choose from; all of these are no longer anywhere to be seen. There's even a female protagonist instead of the hot-blooded whip carrier of old. Worry not, though, for while *Order Of Ecclesia* marks yet another change of pace for the popular handheld outings, this is arguably the best yet. Probably because it feels so… well… *old*.

Don't get us wrong, this isn't because *Castlevania: Order Of Ecclesia* looks hideous – far from it, in fact – it's just that it feels more like *Super Castlevania* or *Rondo Of Blood*, as opposed to the sprawling Metroidvania efforts that so many gamers are now familiar with.

It's also ridiculously tough in places, further adding to the old-school feel. If you think you're a dab hand at *Castlevania* games then just wait until you meet the first boss. A huge imposing skeleton, with deadly fists and the ability to kill you with a few simple swipes, this baddie puts up a tough fight that's the first of many challenging encounters you'll find yourself participating in. These fights never feel unfair though, and once you've worked out each boss's attack patterns you'll soon be able to make short work of them.

Castlevania: Order Of Ecclesia also feels far more adult than past games in the series, with a central character that's surprisingly hard to like. While its dark theme sometimes sits uneasily with the beautiful visuals that are on display.

Glyphs now play a huge part in *Order Of Ecclesia*, with lead heroine Shanoa able to suck them out of defeated monsters, she then uses them to create a variety of different weapons and other handy effects. It's a nice addition to the series that enables you to create a surprising amount of different combos, making the tough battle that little bit easier.

Level design has also changed; areas are smaller than in the past. On the other hand, there are still plenty of nooks and crannies to uncover, and the stages themselves are very well designed. Add in a variety of genuinely useful side quests that enable you to build everything from new armour to handy jewellery, and *Order Of Ecclesia* is arguably the strongest handheld *Castlevania* yet. We still wish that more would be made of the online play, but fans of the series are going to be more than happy with this latest outing.

88%



OPINION

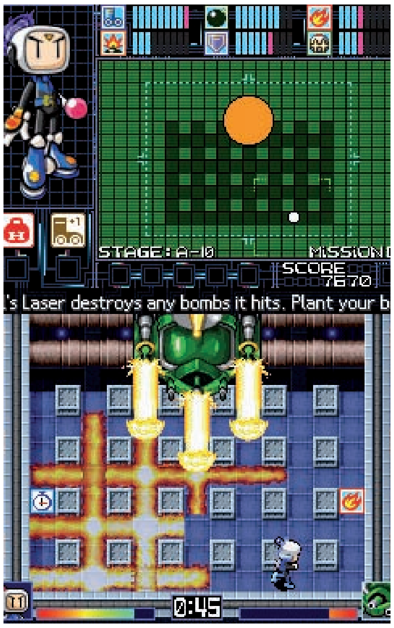
I have to say I'm really starting to get a little bit bored of the Metroidvanias now. This is the third such example on DS, following another three on GBA and one on Sony's PlayStation. Just how many more do we need? Still, taken in isolation Order Of Ecclesia is a very good Castlevania game so it's hard to hold a grudge against it for too long. I just hope that Konami can come up with something more original next time. The potential for a great Castlevania is definately there, it just needs to be realised that little bit better. Regardless, I'll still be picking it up. **Ashley Day**

» The levels in *Order Of Ecclesia* look absolutely glorious, making it one of the prettiest DS games we've seen.



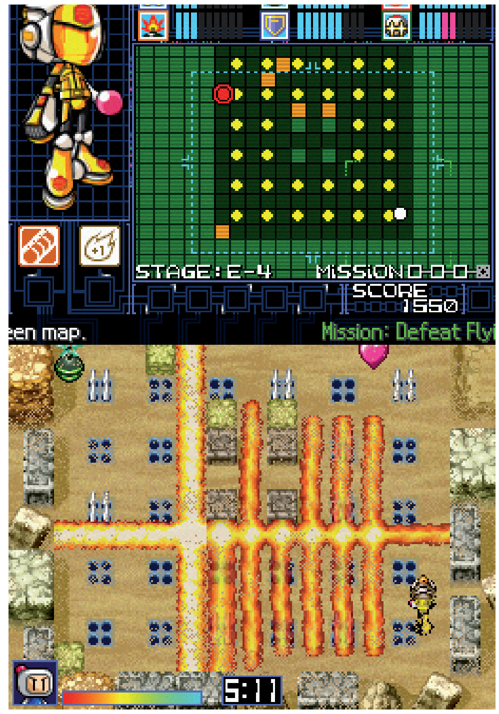








» Multiplayer remains fast and hectic and is the best handheld variation yet.



BOMBERMAN 2

HUDSON SCORES A DIRECT HIT ON THE DS

INFORMATION

- **SYSTEM:** NDS
- **PRICE:** £29.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4



Hudson's *Bomberman* franchise has always tended to be a game of two halves. While the various multiplayer incarnations that have appeared over the years have all been mostly excellent, the single-player modes that accompany them have been another matter entirely. Often extremely dull to play through and usually lacking the frantic urgency that has always made the multiplayer outings so enjoyable, they're rarely ever worth bothering with. Unsurprisingly we weren't exactly looking forward to Hudson's latest DS effort, if only because we could feel déjà vu already setting in.

As it turns out, though, we needn't have worried, as *Bomberman 2*'s single-player effort turns out to be surprisingly good fun. Yes it's loaded down with the many gimmicks that have always seemed to dilute the *Sonic* franchise, and yes it features a far skinnier version of Bomberman that we still can't properly gel with, but Hudson has actually put quite a bit of thought into *Bomberman 2* and the extra planning the videogame has been given clearly shines through.

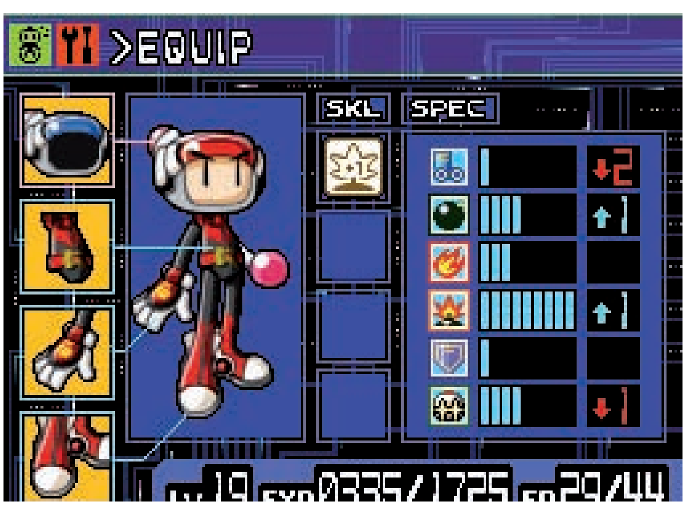
Taking place across levels that are often several screens in size, stages have now been chopped down into bite-size sections that require you to do anything from destroy a set amount of switches, to dispensing off all on-screen enemies, or defeating huge bosses that require a set amount of bombs before they'll finally keel over and die. Other stages simply require you to reach the exit in a certain amount of time, which would be fine if you didn't have to destroy the many crates that were inconveniently left in your way. Aarggh!

Amazingly, though, it all works, and you're never left dreading the next stage – mainly because you're never quite sure what's going to be thrown at you next. It's not quite going down the mini-game route of previous *Bomberman*s but it's certainly a massive improvement over some of the yawn-fests we've had to trudge through. There are even some nifty RPG elements, which see you continually upgrading your Bomberman by enhancing him with the many power-ups you find on your travels. It's hardly original, but works well within the *Bomberman* framework.

Lastly, we get to *Bomberman 2*'s multiplayer and suffice to say it's very good indeed. Playable both against local DS users or over Nintendo's Wi-Fi service, it's surprisingly lag free, offers plenty of different game modes and has more options than you can shake an exploding bomb at. It's certainly not the best *Bomberman* we've played – that accolade is still held by the excellent Saturn outing – but it's the best we've played on a portable system. Pick it up now if you've ever had a passion to watch things explode.

84%

» As you clear levels you will pick up some items that can be used to gradually enhance Bomberman.

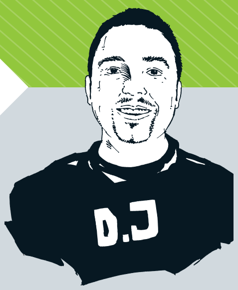


OPINION

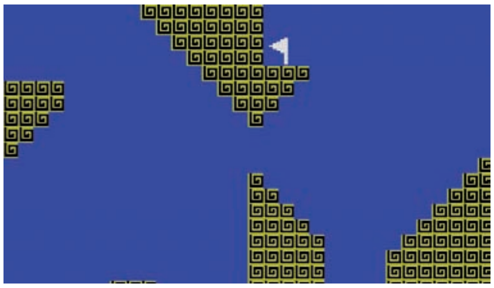


Amazing. A *Bomberman* single-player experience that's actually fun to play through. Who would have thought it? Admittedly, I've spent far more of my spare time playing the excellent multiplayer mode, but it's pleasing to see that the franchise still has plenty of life in it. Add in some neat RPG elements and some extremely tough (but never unfair) level design and *Bomberman 2* will have you playing for an absolute eternity. Or at least until the next game gets announced…

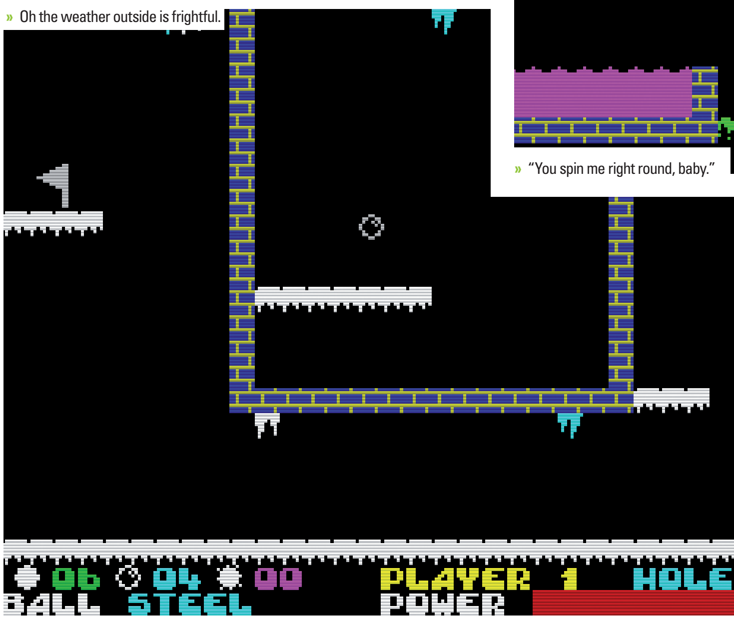
Stuart Hunt

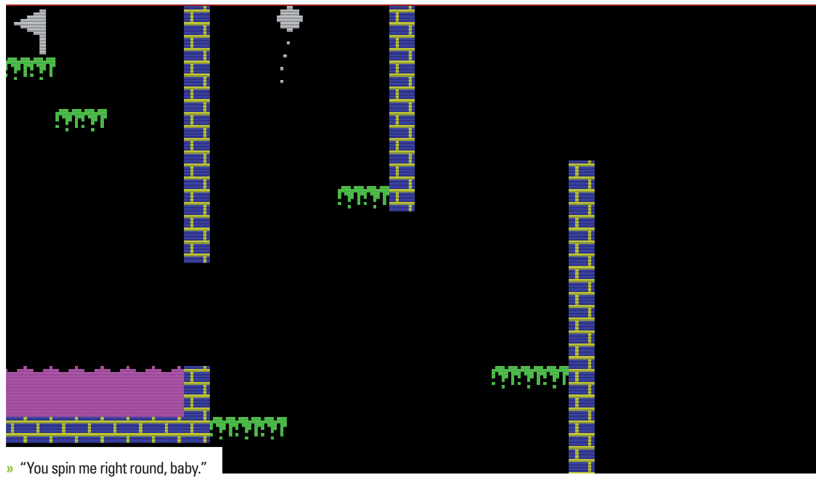


The arrival of a new Jonathan Cauldwell game is always cause for celebration and it turns out that *Albatrossity* is one of his very best. If that doesn't float your boat you'll find some great remakes, including Ovine Designs' excellent homage to *Bruce Lee* and a truly astonishing tribute to Konami's *Gradius*. Oh and did you know a 2600 port of *Zoo Keeper* has been discovered?

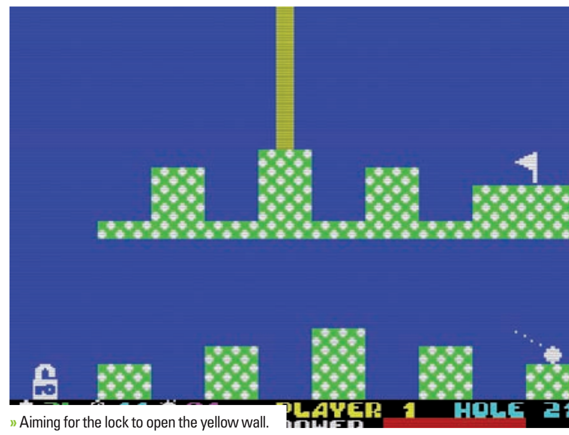


» Oh the weather outside is frightful.





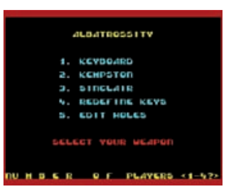
» "You spin me right round, baby."



» Aiming for the lock to open the yellow wall.

ALBATROSSITY

PLAYING A ROUND WITH STICKY BALLS



FORMAT: 48K SPECTRUM
DEVELOPED BY: JONATHAN CAULDWELL
LINK: HTTP://JONATHAN6.FORTUNECITY.COM/EGGHEAD/
RELEASE DATE: 2009
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

There have always been sports that have left us wondering how they came into existence and golf is probably at the top of the list. It's hard to imagine the very first couple of golfers, one handing the other a club and ball before saying, "Well, you see that hole about three hundred yards away?" On top of that, somebody out there then decided bopping a little ball into an equally minuscule hole over huge distances wasn't already silly enough (even when the players wore hideous checked trousers and carried two pairs with them in case they got a hole in one), and made a decision to create a 'crazy' variation where windmills, ramps, castles and various other hazards were placed around the fairway.

Jonathan Cauldwell's latest offering ramps the surreal nature of the game up even further, and proves that when it comes to splicing genres, no one else is as inventive. Some of the basic rules of golf remain intact, with the ball starting at one point and needing to be belted around until it reaches another that has a flag sticking out of it, but from there onwards things are different. The course itself is far removed from where Tarby and Brucie prowl, the fairways of *Albatrossity* are contained within rooms filled with platforms that are viewed sideways on during play and populated with hazards such as deadly stalactites and patrolling windmills that destroy golf balls if they touch them.

In order to take a shot, the player needs to decide on the angle they intend on launching the ball at, how much power to put behind the shot and which of the three kinds of ball they would like to use. Rubber balls are light and travel a good distance, but they bounce around a lot before coming to a stop. Balls made of steel have less bounce and therefore won't travel as far, so they're pretty useful for more precise shots (as well as being dense enough to smash a path through some of the hazards). Sticky balls, meanwhile, as their rather dubious name suggests, are able to adhere to just about any non-fatal surface. Bizarrely, the process of taking a shot 'loses' the current ball so, rather than counting the number of strokes taken for every hole, a limited quota of each is supplied at the start of the round with extra balls being issued after putting.

Despite the screenshots making *Albatrossity* look like a platformer, it's actually more about skill in the same way that golf itself is. New players can simply pick it up and enjoy themselves knocking the ball around; however, anyone wanting to get really far will have to spend some time learning how the angle of shot affects the ball's movement. They will have to work out how each type of ball responds to different power levels and where best to deploy the rarer steel and sticky varieties. That need to learn might be something of a deterrent for a few players, but for those who enjoy giving their gaming some thought it's well worth getting into. With over 30 pre-defined holes and an on-board editor, there's quite a bit to play through too.

89%

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

AIRSTRIKER

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

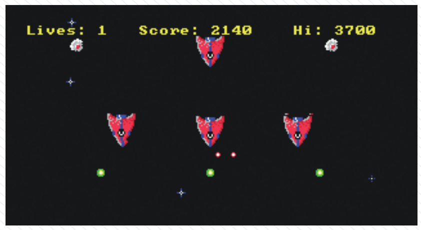
» **FORMAT:** MEGA DRIVE » **DEVELOPER:** ELECTROKINESIS STUDIOS
» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://SYNIPHAS.DRX.PL/ELECTROINDEX.HTM

Players of *Airstriker* are issued a spaceship each to zoom into battle with some unimaginative aliens (there's only one ship design for the entire fleet) while dodging asteroids and returned fire. That won't sound particularly deep and with good reason; *Airstriker* is a remarkably simple game and, with a playing time less than two minutes for the standard one-player mode, it's short as well. That lack of scale means it isn't even facing relegation from the same league as Mega Drive classics such as *Truxton* or *Raiden Trad*.

It isn't perfect either because, along with the bugs that occasionally cause newly spawned bullets or attackers to not move, the collision detection is overzealous to a ridiculous level. *Airstriker* does have a simple charm to it, though, so if players stick with it to learn how to compensate for the collisions it's a little more playable, while more dedicated shoot-'em-up fans have the potential to build up their scores.

48%

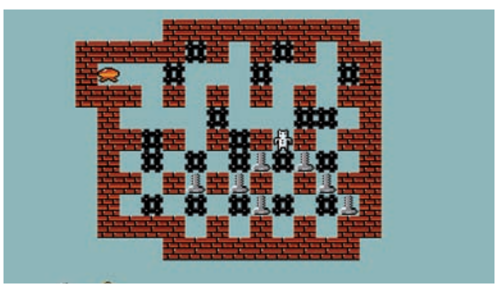




» You wait ages for one red spaceship and…



» We've never played the original game, but we do like this update.



AMIGA ROBBO

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** AGA AMIGA » **DEVELOPER:** ROBERT SZACKI
» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://MINNIATIAN.REPUBLIKA.PL/

Robbo the robot has a screw loose. Several, in fact, but he's determined to reclaim them. This means he'll have to enter assorted chambers and negotiate his way around the various obstacles. Encumbrances include solid brick walls, doors that require keys to unlock, blocks of debris, crates that can be pushed if there is nothing on the opposite side, bombs that can be detonated to destroy debris or crates and bullets that can, amongst other things, be used for remotely detonating bombs. Once all of the screws are collected, it's back to Robbo's spacecraft and onwards to the next level.

Based on a popular Polish Atari 8-bit game, *Amiga Robbo* is an interesting variation on *Sokoban* that requires a similar amount of forward planning – even the earliest levels need some thought and later ones will provide a significant challenge. Oddly, despite requiring an AGA Amiga, the graphics are surprisingly plain and this game lacks any real presentation (as well as preferably needing a hard drive), but if players bear with it there are some good puzzles to work through.

72%

SORT 'EM

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** AMSTRAD CPC » **DEVELOPER:** LUBLU ENTERTAINMENT
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.LUBLU.DK

Written by the developer of the original, this Amstrad CPC implementation of mobile phone title *Sort 'Em* is somewhere between a puzzle game and a reaction test. Groups of balls fall from the top of the screen and the player controls a chute at the bottom that can, at the tap of the space bar, be used to redirect balls in one of two directions; blue balls need to be parcelled off to the left, red to the right. Making mistakes upsets your boss, his ire being measured by the Boss-Temp-O-Meter to the right of the play area.

The visuals aren't award winning, but they're adequate. The title music is cheerful (although the lack of any in-game sound is a shame) and our only real gripe about this charmingly simple game is that it lacks joystick control; the option of having left and right on the stick to position the chute would have made it just a little easier to enjoy.

71%

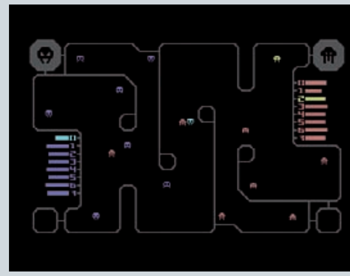


» Three levels of play, each with a top score.



WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» *Not Even Human*, not to be confused with *Too Human*.

» The aliens are coming!

After the success of its previous C64 cartridges, the RGCD posse has started making noises about a fourth release. *Not Even Human* is a strategy-based action game where two teams must compete to drain each other of energy. Since the original release last year, several bugs have been repaired, some cosmetic enhancements made and there is now computer AI for single-player campaigns. When it's released, *www.rgcd.co.uk/shop* will be the place to visit.



» Like *Harry Potter*, only better.

» Fell off the back of a lorry

Thieves School features a presumably *Discworld*-inspired educational establishment for pupils studying the 'stealing arts'. Having failed a key exam, our two antiheroes are offered a way to complete their education and the player gets to help in their education by navigating them around a platform-based environment as they 'borrow' various items. The playable preview of this attractive platformer is available from the official website at **http://ws.vtrbandaancha.net/En/TS/TS.htm** which is also the address for ordering information.

» New developments for the MSX

The sixth MSX Dev competition closed its doors to entries at the end of January. This annual competition for MSX game writers has always produced excellent games and this year hasn't been an exception. Once the voting has been finished, the completed games, their documentation and the results can be found at **http://msxdev.msxblue.com/** along with the entries from previous years.

HOMEBREW

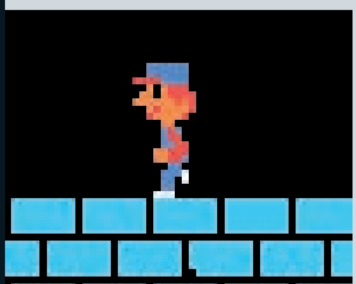
» The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

» Tranz Am returns

There's nothing worse than having the mag nearly ready to go to print and then discovering a cool remake you wished you'd covered. We've just stumbled across Mick Farrow's excellent update of Ultimate's *Tranz Am* and we're really impressed with it. It's bloody hard – just like the original – but it's proven to be thoroughly addictive and was responsible for the homebrew section being finished a day later than scheduled. We'll be covering it in more depth next issue but in the meantime you can download it from **www.classic-retro-games.com/Tranz-Am_425.html**



» It's a simple enough animation but it still excites us.

» Zoo Keeper discovered

It's been long rumoured that a version of Taito's classic arcade hit *Zoo Keeper* was due to appear on the Atari 2600, but we're now getting a little nearer to the truth. Coder Ken Van Mersenbergen has discovered an animation video that's been taken from the Atari 2600 version and has hosted his find on YouTube. Needless to say, hopes are now high that more code of this game will materialise at a later date. Watch the video at **www.youtube.com/watch?v=Auab0_LH2ug**.

FLASH BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at **City Jumper**

NOW HERE'S A simple, yet undeniably addictive little concept. Guide your little stick man to the end of each stage by simply jumping over any obstacles that get in his way. Initially you just have to contend with two-story buildings, but you'll later be required to clear bridges, dodge rainclouds and catch seagulls. Download it from www.retroflashgames.com/flash-games/city-jumper/

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING…



NEMESIS ONLINE

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.REMAKESONLINE.COM/NEMESIS/INDEX.PHP

A great remake should ideally build upon the elements of an original classic, while adding enough of its own features to ensure that it can proudly stand tall as its own creation. *Nemesis Online* does just this. While it's not quite as polished as Konami's classic blaster, it remains a superb homebrew release that is just begging to be enjoyed by a wider audience.

Nemesis Online is a remake of the MSX version, and it's an amazingly comprehensive effort that boasts a wealth of features, including the ability to edit your own levels and play online. If you've ever been interested in the *Gradius* franchise of shoot-'em-ups then you owe it to yourself to check out this cracking blaster.



GENERALLY

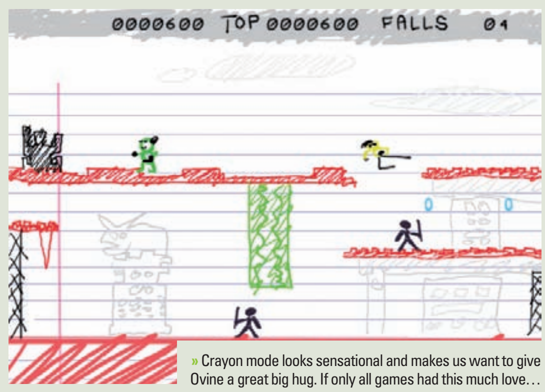
» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://GENERALLY.RSCSITES.ORG/DOWNLOAD.SHTML

With its wonderful toy car aesthetics, *GeneRally* will grab your attention and keep on delighting through a bevy of surprises, modes and customisation. The presentation throughout the videogame is fantastic. As well as tweaking races, you get *Bonanza Bros.*-looking pitmen to top up your fuel gauge and – akin to *Super Skidmarks* – you can select various different handling vehicles to whizz around in. The game's wonderfully simple track editor rounds everything off quite nicely.

Our only criticisms of *GeneRally* would be the annoying Schumacher AI of computer opponents, and the fact that it wouldn't let us take a screenshot of the amazing Dreamcast swirl track we designed.

Remake of the Month





» Crayon mode looks sensational and makes us want to give Ovine a great big hug. If only all games had this much love…

ULTIMATE BRUCE LEE

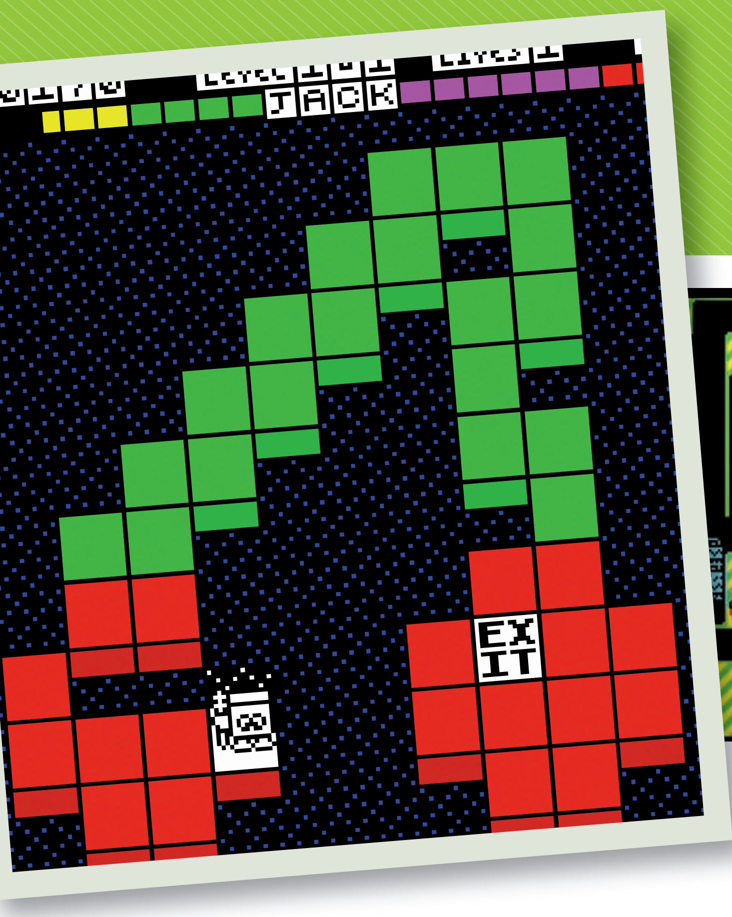
» **DOWNLOAD:** HTTP://WWW.OVINE.NET/

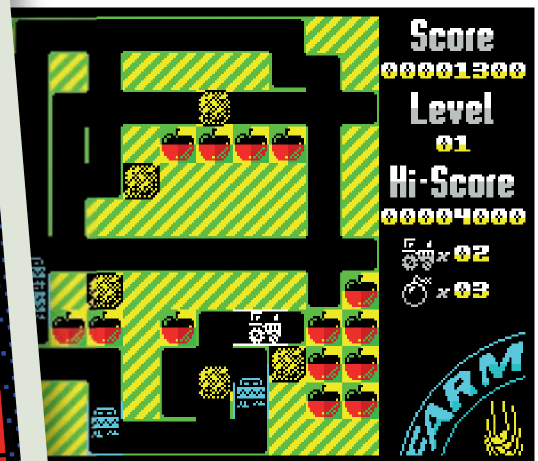
You've got to hand it to Ovine Design, it certainly goes all out with its updates. *Ultimate Bruce Lee* is a ridiculously detailed homage to the martial artist's best videogame. While the new high-res effort is exactly what we'd expect from the meticulous coders at Ovine, it's the additional gameplay modes and other skins that we've fallen in love with. Crayon mode looks sensational with little stick figures of Bruce and his ninja opponents running around the screen, while Tron mode is just as iconic and boasts beautiful sprites that ooze atmosphere and look beautiful as they leave sparkling trails in their wake.

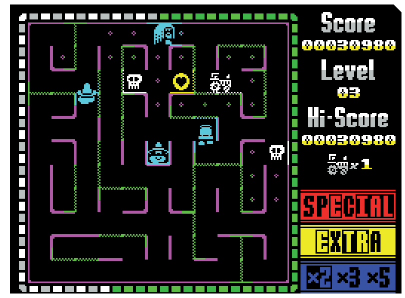
Gameplay has also been improved on, with several new modes to spice up the action. All-Out War and Ultimate Bruce Lee will cause you the most grief, but our favourite edition is the Survival mode; it gradually increases the on-screen enemies until the screen is virtually filled with the blighters.

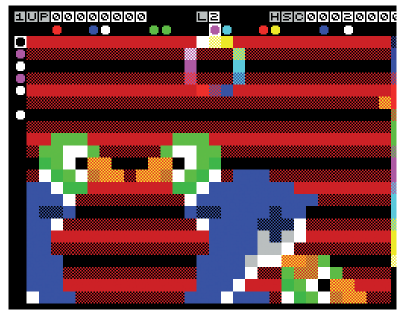
Another element that impresses us is the way Ovine has handled progression. Initially it's just a few modes that are available to you, with later stages opened after continued play – unless you happen to know what the cheat is…

The only real niggle we have with this otherwise excellent remake is that the gameplay can feel a little stodgy in places – running up and down ladders isn't as easy as we'd like. Now if only Ovine would remake *Strider*…









» **Above:** We couldn't get on with *Farmer Jack's* first adventure, but a recent play suggests we may have been a little too harsh on it first time around. » **Top Right:** *Hedge Monkeys* is another outing for *Farmer Jack*, this one can be picked up for free, so head on over to **www.worldofspectrum.org** or **www.bobs-stuff.co.uk/**
» **Right:** *SplATTR* is an amazing little game little shooter that looks ace and will keep you going forever. Little wonder we gave it 91%.

HOMEBREW HEROES

THIS MONTH WE SPEAK TO **BOB SMITH**, A PROLIFIC SPECTRUM CODER WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACE FARMER JACK GAMES

RG: When did you begin programming?
BS: I started off with a ZX81 and began typing programs into it from books. Before then we'd had a Binatone TV Master, and a Videopac G7000, but the ZX81 was the first one you could program on – it was fantastic! Moving onto a 48K Spectrum I continued with BASIC, but it quickly became apparent that I couldn't emulate what the likes of Ultimate were doing, so I started to learn machine code.

RG: Why code on the Spectrum?
BS: It was the system I had the most exposure to, and was the only choice then, and became the most obvious choice now. I knew its features and limitations… it has a lot of fond memories attached to it as well. I also think the 8-bit computers were the last place where you could easily, as a single person, code a complete game of a similar standard to those released at the time.

RG: Where did the idea of *Farmer Jack* come from?
BS: One of the arcade games I liked in my youth was *Mr. Do!* and I wrote a version of it in BASIC at the time. When I came back to programming the Spectrum five or so years ago I wanted to write an arcade game, so it seemed like the obvious choice. I hated the clown character, though, and the magic ball weapon, and so decided that if anybody was to be going around collecting fruit and things that it should be a farmer. Incidentally Farmer Jack is actually a real person, although he's not a farmer, but instead owns an allotment and does great homebrew fruit wine.

RG: He's appeared in three games now, can we expect a fourth?
BS: He's unlikely to appear again in a single-screen maze game. I've done variations now of *Mr. Do!* (*…Harvest Havoc*), *Ladybug* (*…Hedge Monkeys*), and *Pac-Man* (*…Treasure Trove*), and that's probably as far as I'm going to take him in that direction, although I'd never say never. However, I do think he's a great character, and would like him to appear in something a lot bigger – like a *Zelda* game perhaps. That's just a vague thought at the moment, although he will return one day.

RG: What's your proudest achievement?
BS: The first time I managed to get a 16x16 sprite moving smoothly and quickly around the screen in machine code, back in 1984, was a fantastic moment as I then realised I could actually do what Ultimate were doing. I felt at last that writing a game like *JetPac* was actually within my grasp.

RG: How do you decide which games will be free and which ones you'll charge for?
BS: It all depends on the amount of work I put into them to be honest. The first *Farmer Jack* game, *Stranded*, *Stranded 2.5*, and *SplATTER* all required a lot of work, and pain, in coding them – *Jack* uses an A* path-finding routine for the enemy movement, for example, which caused a lot of headaches to write, but I felt was required to allow the enemies to intelligently hunt down the player. The other *Jack* games, however, were essentially built on the same engine as the first, although with improvements and revisions, so were quicker to write and, as a result, I felt should be free.

RG: You seem to have a particular affinity for the puzzle genre, any particular reason why?
BS: Simply that I like playing them. I think they have a timeless quality, and a puzzle game on a Spectrum could play just as well as one on an Xbox 360 – just look at something like *Bejeweled* which plays equally as well on a mobile phone as a high-end PC.

RG: What was it like returning to *Stranded* after a 20-year break?
BS: I'd written *Dominetris* to prove to myself if I still could, and *Farmer Jack* got me back into the swing of things, so I felt it was time to do justice to my original ideas for *Stranded*. I had all the original code, but it had to be completely dropped, as it just wasn't going to hack it now. So I dug out some old notes from the time, added some new ideas, and set about coding the 2.5D masked graphics routines (hence the name), and the rest fell into shape around them.

RG: Why do you think the homebrew scene remains so popular?
BS: Nostalgia obviously plays a large part of it, but I also think a lot of people don't actually want to have to invest the huge amount of time most modern games seem to demand. Retro games provide more instant gratification – you can load up *JetPac*, for example, and immediately have a quick blast without having to first unlock your weapons and each level.

HIGH FIVE
The homebrew games Bob can't live without

1 **BipBoi:** Although a demo of an unfinished game, BipBoi is fun and refreshing with bright graphics.

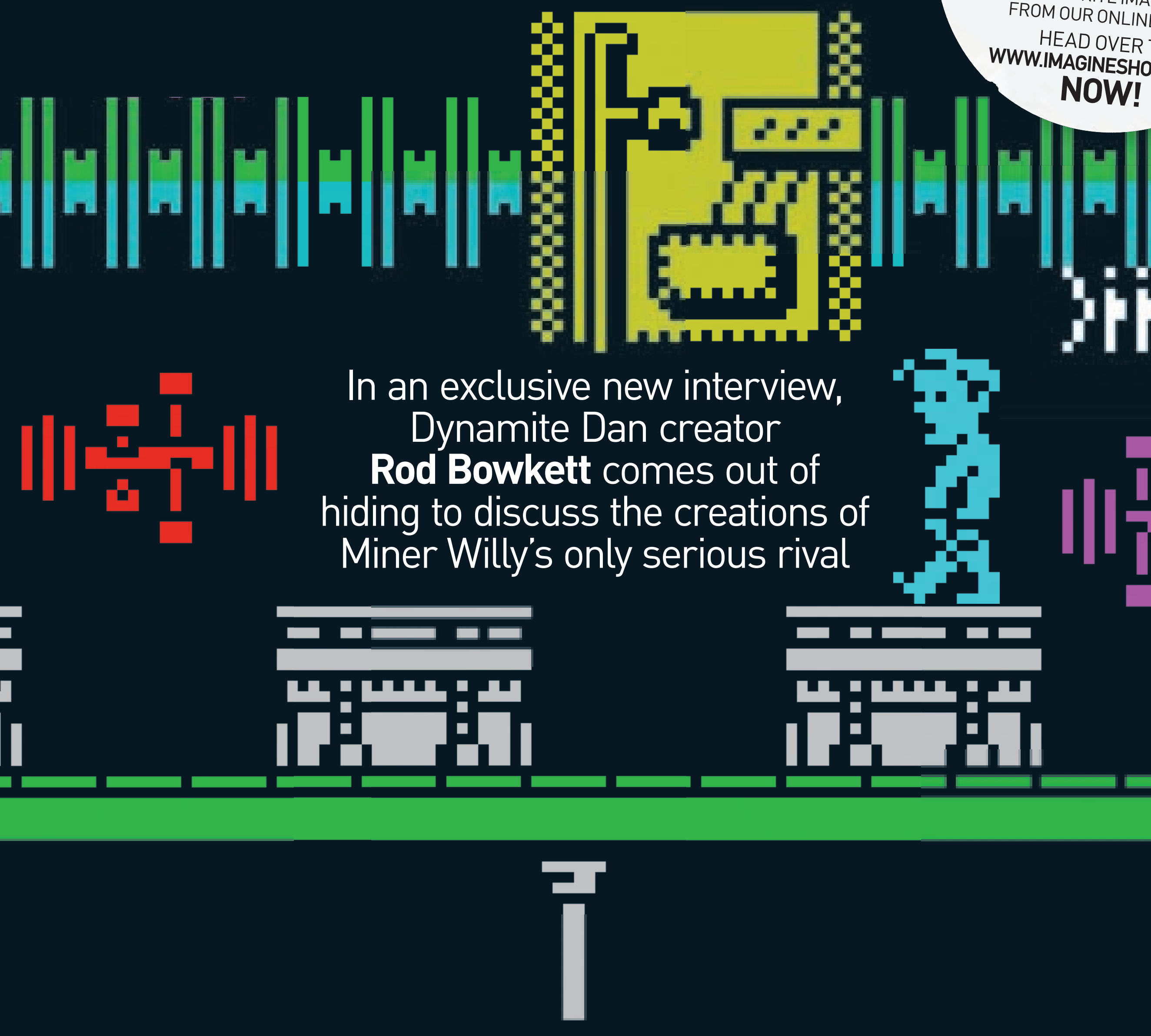
2 **Blizzard's Rift:** *Thrust* is a great game, and this takes the concept so much further in Jon's usual quirky style.

3 **Bomberman 93 (Wii virtual console):** A bit of a loose link, but the virtual console makes some great old games easily accessible to the modern audience. It's a game everyone should play.

4 **Sokoban:** A traditional puzzle game implemented with great presentation & playability. I love the fun graphics and music, and keep coming back to it as I work out each level.

5 **Sudoku:** Another traditional puzzle game backed up by a great implementation. Not only do you get pre-set puzzles to solve, but you can also design your own, or have it solve any that you give it. The interface is great; you can choose to play it entirely using the joystick rather than typing each number – great for a DS.

PURE DYNAMITE



In an exclusive new interview, Dynamite Dan creator **Rod Bowkett** comes out of hiding to discuss the creations of Miner Willy's only serious rival

MORE EXCITING FEATURES

» We travel up to Dundee to speak to the founding fathers of what is now Rockstar North. David Jones, Mike Dailly and the rest of the DMA Design crew talk everything from *Lemmings* to *GTA*.

» You had to wait a while for it, but our brand new interview with Space Invaders creator, Tomohiro Nishikado is definately worth it.

» With Sega recently releasing its excellent new *Mega Drive Collection*, we decided to speak to the developers themselves to find out what makes the 16-bit system so special.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 26 MARCH 2009

RETRO DIRECTORY

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE LISTING ITS FAVOURITE WEBSITES AND INTERVIEWING SOME OF THEIR KEY MEMBERS. THIS MONTH WE SPEAK TO THE WONDERFUL FRANK GASKING, OCCASIONAL RETRO GAMER CONTRIBUTOR AND OWNER OF ONE OF THE GREATEST COMMODORE 64 WEBSITES AROUND: GAMES THAT WEREN'T

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

ATARI AGE
www.atariage.com
Excellent resource site dedicated to all aspects of Atari gaming.

ATARI ORG
www.atari.org
Another superb Atari site with every machine from the 2600 to arcade classics.

AUSSIE ARCADE
www.aussiearcade.com.au
A fantastic arcade forum catering for an Aussie audience.

CPC ZONE
www.cpczone.net
Excellent site for the Amstrad range of computers with all the latest news and reviews.

C64 GAME ENDINGS
www.c64endings.co.uk/
Over 260 endings for classic and not so classic C64 games.

LEMON64
www.lemon64.com
Superb Commodore 64 site filled with insightful reviews and a friendly forum.

LEMON AMIGA
www.lemonamiga.com
This great Amiga site is run by Kim Lemon, owner of Lemon 64.

MACRETRO
www.macretro.tk
Getting emulators up and running on the Mac, this is a brilliant site.

NEO-GEO.COM
www.neo-geo.com
Dedicated to SNK's systems, but with lots of other stuff to enjoy.

WEEKEND GAMER
www.weekend-gamer.co.uk
Great site that covers a range of topics, from TV to gaming.

SYSTEM16
www.system16.com
Sega focused, but also dedicated to covering as many arcade games as possible.

NTSC-UK
http://ntsc-uk.domino.org/
This site is devoted to imports, but there's a retro section with useful advice on rare imports.

OLD-COMPUTERS.COM
http://old-computers.com
If you think the 2600 is ancient, visit this fascinating site.



RG: Retro Gamer: So when did you set up Games That Weren't?
Frank Gasking: Well, GTW originally started around 1998 as a regular article for *Commodore Zone* magazine and then expanded into a website/project a year later. This was mostly thanks to the nagging of Vinny Mainolfi, and so it's our tenth anniversary this year! (And now I feel rather old!).

RG: Why base it around the C64 instead of other systems?
FG: The main site actually covers many platforms in a general way – the sister websites are platform specific mainly to go into greater depth and [more] effort to find games on those platforms. Along with the main site, I maintain and focus on the C64-based site, as it's the platform I grew up with. A good chunk of the titles we search for and have found are based from C64 magazines I used to read at the time and of which I wondered what happened to them (hence how the project really came about in the first place). The research and preservation is quite intensive work for a part-time hobby, so certainly one platform is enough for me to focus on (Though Timo Weirich manages to maintain two!).

RG: What gives Games That Weren't the edge over similar websites?
FG: I'm not sure to be honest – I wouldn't say that we've ever aimed to have the edge over other websites, and actually we're very supportive of what other similar sites are doing. We try to cover general news from all corners of the prototype/lost game world, as well as reporting our own personal discoveries. If we were trying to make a living, I guess then we would have to be a bit more brutal in trying to have the edge…

"WE TRY TO COVER GENERAL NEWS FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE PROTOTYPE/LOST GAME WORLD"

RG: What's the most popular part of the site?
FG: Currently it's the C64 branch of the project, due to it being the longer established of the sites. However, the Amiga, PC and 3DO sites are rapidly increasing in their popularity and the GTW YouTube channel has really taken off, thanks to the efforts of my colleague Timo Weirich.

RG: How can our readers contribute?
FG: In many ways! Submission of news, information, chatting on our forum etc – but, most of all, visitors popping along and enjoying the sites are the biggest contributions of all.

RG: There's a few other Games That Weren't sites now, are you planning any more?
FG: Not from me personally, as the C64 and main sites take up a lot of time and dedication already (especially in the research/preservation stakes). We are certainly encouraging more variations, as the findings themselves are very rewarding. For this we need people to come forward who are up for setting up a sister site for a particular platform. The likes of a ZXGTW or VIC20 GTW site would be very welcome!

RG: What's your favourite lost game and why?
FG: It's a game called *Spellcast* on the C64 that was written by the team behind CJ's *Elephant Antics*. It's a mixture of *Castlevania* and *Ghosts 'N Goblins*, with a rather NES-like feel to it. I guess it's my favourite as I remember it well when it appeared on *Zzap*'s covermount in 1991 and it was one of the first games I was genuinely sad to hear wasn't being finished.

DEEPER LOOK – WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

Games That Weren't
http://gtw64.retro-net.de/



Ever wondered why *Armalyte 2* never saw the light of day? Did you ever ask yourself why *Gauntlet III* was released on the Spectrum and Atari ST and not on the Commodore 64? Well, wonder no longer as Frank Gasking's excellent website has all these answers and more. Now a staggering ten years old, Games That Weren't is a constantly growing love letter to those C64 games that never saw a commercial release and is sure to get any fan of the system teary with nostalgia. Constantly updated, Games That Weren't is an amazing resource site that uncovers every possible stone in order to unearth hidden treasures. If you've ever had an interest in videogame history then this is the perfect place to visit.

RETRO MUSEUM
www.retrocomputermuseum.co.uk
What's interesting about this is that very soon it will be a physical place you can visit.

RACKET BOY
http://racketboy.com/
There's a definite Sega slant to Racket Boy, but it's a lot of fun.

RADIO SEGA
www.radiosega.net
If you're a fan of Sega music you'll love Radio Sega.

SEGA-16.COM
www.sega-16.com
Mega Drive site with some incredibly in-depth interviews.

RETRO 101
www.retro101.co.uk
It's fairly new, but Retro 101 has some informative articles.

RETRO GAMING RADIO
www.monroeworld.com
Superb monthly podcast that looks at the US game market.

RLLMUK FORUM
www.rllmukforum.com/index.php
All the latest games and a retro section with helpful members.

THE RUBBER BEERMAT
http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/themanor33/TRBv2/
Excellent Spectrum site that champions a lot of rare games.

SHOOT THE CORE
www.shootthecore.moonpod.com
This brilliant site loves shmups of all descriptions.

SHMUPS
www.shmups.com
Absolutely amazing website dedicated to the best gaming genre of all time.

VIDEOGAME MUSEUM
www.vgmuseum.com
Screenshots, game endings, cover scans, and reviews.

THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE ARCHIVE
www.vc-reviews.com
Your one-stop shop for everything VC-related.

WORLD OF SPECTRUM
www.worldofspectrum.org
Superb Spectrum site that offers a friendly forum.

GAMESTYLE
www.gamestyle.net
Long-standing website that now includes retro articles.

If you want to add your website to our expanding directory, please contact Darran at **darran.jones@imagine-publishing.co.uk**



THE PUNISHER

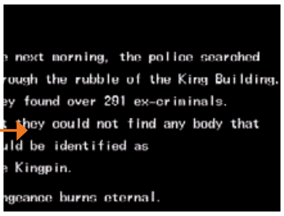
The Punisher was a cracking side-scrolling arcade fighter from Capcom. It tells the tale of reckless antihero Frank Castle who's seeking vengeance for the death of his wife and kids at the hands of the mob. Yeah, warm family fun it wasn't, but enjoyable it most certainly was. And this is the outcome to all that bloodshed











SCREEN 1

As the Punisher faces The Kingpin inside his office block, the Pun is reminded of the last level of *Final Fight*, a game that he used to love shovelling quarters into as a kid – that was until his local arcade replaced it with a *Top Skater* cab. Jerks.

SCREEN 2

Flooring the giant, the Punisher is joined by his chain-smoking pal Nick Fury. While standing over the crimelord, surprised at how much dust Kingpin's death throes are kicking up into the air, our heroes discover the place is set to blow.

SCREEN 3

The duo make their way towards their *A-Team*-style van, then they remember they'd forgotten to pilfer the crime lord's wallet and give it to charity. Fury suggests they should have spent it all on beer, romancing and throwing stars.

SCREEN 4

Our heroes flee the scene as the Kingpin's oversized building begins to crumble, leaving a nasty cloud of dust, bits of masonry and human remains in its wake. Mayor Mike Haggar is going to have a fit when he gets the phone call.

SCREEN 5

The cops turn up to survey the wreckage and claim to find the remains of "over 291 ex-criminals". There's no sign of Kingpin, though. He shouldn't be hard to spot – he's 20 feet tall and weighs 400 pounds.